

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark green color, framing the central text.

# **GUZ 22 Song Of Solomon**

*Bible Commentary:  
David Guzik TEV - XXII*

**David Guzik**

**David Guziks' Commentary On**  
**22 Song Of Solomon**  
**Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)**

**Son 1:1** The most beautiful of songs, by Solomon.

**The Bride Confesses Her Love**

Son 1:2 Your lips cover me with kisses; your love is better than wine.

Son 1:3 There is a fragrance about you; the sound of your name recalls it. No woman could keep from loving you.

Son 1:4 Take me with you, and we'll run away; be my king and take me to your room. We will be happy together, drink deep, and lose ourselves in love. No wonder all women love you!

Son 1:5 Women of Jerusalem, I am dark but beautiful, dark as the desert tents of Kedar, but beautiful as the draperies in Solomon's palace.

Son 1:6 Don't look down on me because of my color, because the sun has tanned me. My brothers were angry with me and made me work in the vineyard. I had no time to care for myself.

Son 1:7 Tell me, my love, Where will you lead your flock to graze? Where will they rest from the noonday sun? Why should I need to look for you among the flocks of the other shepherds?

**Solomon and His Bride Delight in Each Other**

Son 1:8 Don't you know the place, loveliest of women? Go and follow the flock; find pasture for your goats near the tents of the shepherds.

Son 1:9 You, my love, excite men as a mare excites the stallions of Pharaoh's chariots.

Son 1:10 Your hair is beautiful upon your cheeks and falls along your neck like jewels.

Son 1:11 But we will make for you a chain of gold with ornaments of silver.

Son 1:12 My king was lying on his couch, and my perfume filled the air with fragrance.

Son 1:13 My lover has the scent of myrrh as he lies upon my breasts.

Son 1:14 My lover is like the wild flowers that bloom in the vineyards at Engedi.

Son 1:15 How beautiful you are, my love; how your eyes shine with love!

Son 1:16 How handsome you are, my dearest; how you delight me! The green grass will be our bed;

Son 1:17 the cedars will be the beams of our house, and the cypress trees the ceiling.

## **Song of Solomon 1:1-17**

### **Song of Solomon 1 - "Rightly Do They Love You"**

#### **A. Introduction to the Maiden, the Beloved, and the daughters of Jerusalem.**

*1. (1) Title: The Song of All Songs.*

#### **The song of songs, which is Solomon's.**

a. **The song of songs:** This great song, or collection of poetic songs, is unique in the Bible. If the Song of Solomon was not in our Bible and we were to discover it as an ancient document from the time of Solomon, it is unlikely that we would include it in the collection of Old Testament books.

i. "If a manuscript of this little book were found alone, detached from the biblical context and tradition, it

undoubtedly would be viewed as secular. The book has no obvious religious content.” (Kinlaw)

ii. It seems that Bible translators cannot even agree on a *name* for the book. Some call it “Song of Solomon,” some “Song of Songs,” some even use the Latin word for *songs*, calling it “Canticles.”

iii. No matter what one calls this book it has rightly been highly praised, even by those who have interpreted it in somewhat allegorical and speculative ways. “The entire history of the world from its beginning to this very day does not outshine that day on which this book was given to Israel. All the Scriptures, indeed, are holy... but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.” (Rabbi Aqiba, an early Jewish commentator on Song of Solomon, cited in Kinlaw)

iv. Charles Spurgeon preached 59 sermons on this book (in Victorian England) and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) preached 86 sermons on chapters one and two alone.

b. **The song of songs:** Many different interpretive approaches have been used in understanding this great song.

i. Some avoid this book altogether. Origen (c.185-c.254), an important teacher in the early church, said of the Song of Solomon: “I advise and counsel everyone who is not yet rid of vexations of the flesh and blood, and has not ceased to feel the passions of this bodily nature, to refrain from reading the book and the things that will be said about it.” Origen apparently felt he was prepared to study Song of Solomon because he castrated himself when he was a young man.

ii. Others embrace this book with great devotion but see it primarily as an allegory describing the love relationship between God and His people, not between a husband and wife. "The early Jewish rabbis taught that the book pictures God's love for Israel. Early Christian writers took the same approach, but they replaced Israel with the Church. One writer in the third century wrote a ten-volume commentary on Song of Solomon, telling how the book describes God's love for Christians." (Estes) Trapp expresses this perspective: "The chief speakers are not Solomon and the Shulamite... but Christ and his Church."

iii. Others see this book primarily as a drama dealing with three characters; Solomon, a simple country shepherd, and the young maiden. The idea is that Solomon one day traveled through his kingdom and saw the young maiden and was captivated by her beauty. Though she was betrothed to the simple shepherd, Solomon brought her back to his palace and tried to win her affection with all lavish gifts and loving words. Though her resolve wavered, just before she gave in to Solomon's attention and affection, she fled his palace and went back to her simple shepherd, her true love.

iv. The best way to see this book is as a literal, powerful description of the romantic and sensual love between a man and a woman, observing both their courtship and their marriage. It does not give us a smooth chronological story, beginning with the introduction of the couple to one another and ending with their married life together. Instead, it is a collection of "snapshots" of their courting and married life, with the pictures not necessarily in order.

v. Yet, because God deliberately uses the marriage relationship as an illustration of the relationship that He has with His people, we find that this great **song of songs** illustrates the love, the intensity, and the beauty of relationship that should exist between God and the believer. This is clearly a *secondary* meaning, sublimated to the plain literal meaning, yet nevertheless valid and important.

vi. "There are those who treat this Book as a song of human love. There are those who consider its only value is that of its mystical suggestiveness. Personally, I believe that both values are here." (Morgan)

c. **The song of songs**: The fact that this "greatest of all songs" focuses on romance and marital love shows us what a high regard God has for the institution of marriage. We might expect that the **songs of songs** be a song that only praises God instead of one that celebrates love and sensuality within marriage.

i. This idea is decidedly contrary to the negative view towards marriage that came early in the history of the church. In 325 at the Council of Nicea, a proposal was made to prohibit all clergy from living as married; but the Council did not approve the proposal. In 386 Pope Siricius commanded that all priests live as celibates, and later this order was extended to include deacons in the church. In this period, many people who were ordained as priests were already married. Leo the Great (440-461), out of concern for these wives, did not allow priests to put their wives away but commanded that the priest and his wife live together as brother and sister – that is, without any sexual relationship. This command led to the rule that a married man could not be ordained as a priest unless he and his wife took a vow that they would live

as celibate, and then led further to the refusal to ordain anyone who was or had been married.

ii. This idea that the *truly spiritual* cannot or should not be married and enjoy sexual love is not based in the Old Testament. The Old Testament has no word for a bachelor; in Old Testament thinking, there were to be none. Every patriarch was married, all priests were married, and as far as we know every prophet was married except for Jeremiah, who was uniquely commanded by God not to marry (Jer 16:2). Since the office of high priest was hereditary, the high priest *had* to marry, showing that only a married man could experience this most intimate closeness and communion with God as the high priest did by entering the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement.

iii. As well, the idea that the *truly spiritual* cannot or should not be married and enjoy sexual love is not based in the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus reaffirmed the value of marriage in Mat 19:3-9 when the religious leaders came to Him with a question about divorce. Heb 13:4 tells us that the marriage bed – understood as the place of sexual relations in marriage – is undefiled and should be honored by all. Paul told us that it was desirable for elders and church leaders to be married (1Ti 3:4 and Tit 1:6-7). Jesus began His ministry by blessing a wedding (Joh 3:29-30), and the final step in man's relationship and fellowship with God is pictured as a wedding feast (Rev 19:6-10).

iv. The difference between the Old and New Testaments is that the New will allow that the unmarried state can also be good and even sometimes, in rare cases, preferable. We have the

example of Jesus Himself (and later Paul, as in 1Co 7:7). Jesus also said that the state of a eunuch for the Kingdom of Heaven could be good (Mat 19:11-12), and Paul recognized that singleness could be an advantage in a time of distress (1Co 7:26), but *never* commanded. The Old Testament virtually (not actually) forbids singleness; the New Testament allows it for those who are so gifted and called and encourages them to use their singleness for God's glory (1Co 7:32-35) – while all the while assuming the married state for the vast majority of Christians and Christian leaders.

v. "The Bible does not see marriage as an inferior state, a concession to human weakness. Nor does it see the normal physical love within that relationship as necessarily impure. Marriage was instituted before the Fall by God with the command that the first couple become one flesh. Therefore physical love within that conjugal union is good, is God's will, and should be a delight to both partners (Pro 5:15-19; 1Co 7:3)." (Kindlaw)

vi. Additionally, "The prospect of children is not necessary to justify sexual love in marriage. Significantly, the Song of Songs makes no reference to procreation." (Kinlaw)

vii. Nevertheless, over hundreds and hundreds of years in Christianity, the dominant view was that sexual passion and true spirituality were contradictory and opposed to each other. This idea that for the truly spiritual sexuality was repressed led to a greater emphasis on the idea that we are to be passionately devoted to Jesus Christ as a superior replacement of our sexual desires. "The result of this perspective was that the medieval church had a love affair with the



Song of Songs. An eroticism precluded at the human level was permitted at the divine. No book of Scripture received such attention between Augustine and Luther. What Galatians was to the Reformers, the Song of Songs was to the church for a thousand years." (Kinlaw)

viii. We remind ourselves: "The book never claims to be an allegory. Other genuine allegories in the Bible (e.g., Eze 17:23; Gal 4:22-31) clearly symbolize truths outside the story. Song of Solomon presents itself, instead, as a literal account of the love of a man and a woman." (Estes) "Allegorical writing usually gives hints that it is allegory. The places are fabulous – Doubting Castle, The Slough of Despond, Puritania, Orgiastica; the names are obviously symbolic – Mr Worldly Wiseman, Giant Despair, Mr Reason, the Clevers; and the story-line moves through obvious stages of climax and resolution. None of these is present in the Song of Songs." (Carr)

ix. Additionally, there is significant danger in emphasizing an allegorical approach for *interpretation*, more than just *application*. "Allegory, however, is too often uncertain, unreliable, and by no means safe for supporting faith. Too frequently it depends upon human guesswork and opinion; and if one leans on it, one will lean on a staff made of Egyptian reed [

Eze 29:6]." (Luther, cited in Kinlaw) Yet, even Luther had a hard time taking the Song of Solomon literally. "He saw in the bride a happy and peaceful Israel under Solomon's rule." (Kinlaw)

x. The purely allegorical approach to the Song of Solomon is wrong; yet it cannot be denied that since it presents the height and glory and passion of love in

marriage, it powerfully *illustrates* the love-relationship that exists between God and His people, between Jesus Christ and His Church. "The songs should be treated first as simple and yet sublime songs of human affection. When they are thus understood, reverently the thought may be lifted into the higher value of setting forth the joys of communion between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God, and ultimately between the Church and Christ." (Morgan)

d. **Which is Solomon's:** We learn that Solomon, the son of David and one of the great kings of ancient Israel, composed this song. Solomon composed some 1,005 songs (1Ki 4:32), and this was the greatest (**the song of songs**) among them.

i. Solomon is presumed to be the author because he is mentioned six times (Son 1:5; Son 3:7; Son 3:9; Son 3:11; Son 8:11-12) and there are three references to an unnamed king (Son 1:4; Son 1:12; Son 7:5).

ii. The mention of Solomon brings up another problem with understanding the Song of Solomon; mainly, who are the characters speaking in this collection of poems, and how do we assign specific speaking lines to the specific characters? It must be admitted that the assignment of certain lines to certain individuals is somewhat subjective and will differ from translator to translator.

iii. As mentioned before, some people see this as a drama proving that true love wins out between the young maiden and simple country shepherd, even though Solomon tried to take the maiden for Himself. This would mean that there are four main speakers or characters in the song (including the "chorus" of the daughters of Jerusalem).

iv. It is the opinion of this commentator that there are actually only three main characters or speakers: the young maiden (*the Shulamite*), the young man (Solomon, *the Beloved*), and the chorus (*the Daughters of Jerusalem*). In addition to these main characters or speakers, there are also a few “minor” characters, including the brothers of the Shulamite and some relatives to the wedding party.

v. The young maiden is often called *the Shulamite*. “The girl is usually identified as a country girl from Shunem, a small agricultural village in Lower Galilee... Some commentators suggest that she is one of Solomon’s many wives, perhaps even the Egyptian princess described in 1Ki 3:1; 1Ki 7:8.” (Carr)

vi. The young man is often called *the Beloved* and is generally identified with Solomon. It’s curious that God used Solomon to write this, because in the big picture he miserably failed the tests of love and romance. Believing that the Song of Solomon really is by Solomon, we are left with difficult and perhaps unanswerable questions, such as: What is the occasion upon which it was written? Who is the woman so passionately loved by this man who ended with 700 wives and 300 concubines (1Ki 11:3)? Why was this exceedingly wise man not wise enough to keep his affections for this special maiden alone?

vii. Perhaps the Song of Solomon does not reflect Solomon’s actual experience – certainly not in an enduring sense – but his wise analysis and skillful presentation of the glory of romantic and sensual love; more in theory than in his enduring experience. Solomon was not the first nor the last wise man that lived as a fool when it came to romance and sexuality.

## 2. (2-4a) Opening words of the maiden.

**Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—  
For your love *is* better than wine.  
Because of the fragrance of your good ointments,  
Your name *is* ointment poured forth;  
Therefore the virgins love you.  
Draw me away!**

**a. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:**

The dialogue between the maiden and the young man begins with this passionate desire of the maiden. She wants to receive and experience the love of her beloved.

i. At the very beginning, we catch some of the power of this Song of Solomon. One can learn many relationship principles from this book, but it is not presented to us primarily as a handbook on relationships. "It does not state principles in logical arguments. Instead, it assembles a number of songs, or poems.... It causes us to *feel* as if we are with Solomon and Shulamith, not merely watching them. As we read, we share their feelings." (Estes)

ii. Uncomfortable with such strong passion expressed in sacred Scripture, many commentators minimize the strong desire of this book. As the old Puritan commentator John Trapp said of this verse: "She must have Christ, or else she dies; she must have the 'kisses of Christ's mouth,' even those sweet pledges of love in his Word, or she cannot be contented, but will complain."

iii. "No one can kiss two persons at the same time, so this is a matter of personal significance. Moreover, this kind of kiss is not on the cheek like that of Judas Iscariot, nor is it a kiss upon the feet like that of Mary, but it is 'the kisses of his mouth,' which would express a most personal and intimate love." (Nee)

**b. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:**

Right away we are struck with two complementary truths regarding this loving couple. First, the maiden is not weak and passive; second, the young man is nevertheless a leader and respected as such.

i. This is undeniably a strong woman – who happens to do most of the talking through the Song of Solomon. “Nearly twice as many verses are from her lips than from his.... There is nothing here of the aggressive male and the reluctant or victimized female. They are one in their desires because their desires are God-given.” (Carr)

ii. Yet we see that the young man occupies a place of leadership; she does not initiate a kiss but asks that he might kiss her. She asks that he draw her.

**b. For your love is better than wine:** To the maiden, the **love** of her beloved is more refreshing and intoxicating **than wine**. She is deeply, passionately infatuated with her man.

i. “The theme of sexual enjoyment and consummation runs through the book, and the theme of commitment is central to that whole relationship. This is no passing encounter: this is total dedication and permanent obligation.” (Carr)

ii. Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher of Victorian England, followed the custom of his age and understood the Song of Solomon primarily as a poetic description of the love relationship between Jesus Christ and His people. In his sermon titled *Better than Wine*, he drew forth two main points:

*Christ’s love is better than wine because of what it is not:*

- It is totally safe and may be taken without question – you can't take too much.
- It doesn't cost anything.
- Taking more of it does not diminish the taste of it.
- It is totally without impurities and will never turn sour.
- It produces no ill effects.

*Christ's love is better than wine because of what it is:*

- Like wine, the love of Christ has healing properties.
- Like wine, the love of Christ is associated with giving strength.
- Like wine, the love of Christ is a symbol of joy.
- Like wine, the love of Christ exhilarates the soul.

c. **Your name is ointment poured forth:** This expresses the respect and esteem the maiden had for the *character* and *reputation* of her beloved. The **name** represented much more than just the title by which her beloved was addressed; it represented his character and reputation. His **name** was like **ointment poured forth** and flowed from **the fragrance of his good ointments**.

i. "When she said that his name was 'perfume poured forth,' she meant that his character was as fragrant and refreshing as cologne poured out of a bottle. This is the reason the girls around the palace loved him – not just because he was handsome... but because his inner person was so attractive." (Glickman)

ii. This couple is obviously physically attracted to each other; yet their relationship goes far deeper. "From the start they focused on the other's character and kindness toward each other. They learned to value and care for each other as persons." (Estes)

iii. This shows us that a wise woman chooses a man whom *others* see to be a man of character. There is something not-quite-right if *she* thinks she can see what an amazing guy he is, but no one else can see it.

iv. The seriousness of her estimation of him – going far deeper than just a physical or sexual attraction – shows us the character of their passionate love. Reading this collection of love poems, one might easily think that this is primarily a book about *falling in love*. Instead, it is much more accurately seen as a book about *building love*.

d. **Therefore the virgins love you:** The maiden understood that *others* could see the good character qualities in her beloved, without necessarily being romantically attracted to him. This made her love him all the more.

e. **Draw me away:** This was the logical desire of a woman so taken with loving desire towards her beloved. She wanted to be *with him*, and to be *one with him*.

3. (4b) *An interjection from the "Daughters of Jerusalem."*

**We will run after you.**

a. **We will run after you:** The "**we**" of this verse is somewhat hard to identify, and as mentioned previously, the assignment of particular lines to particular characters through this collection of poems is somewhat subjective and may differ from translation to translation. The New King James translation assigns this line to the "Daughters of Jerusalem."

b. **We will run after you:** The idea is that the Daughters of Jerusalem – this on-looking chorus, who observe and celebrate the love between the maiden and the young man – they want to see what will happen as

this wonderful love builds and takes its course. *It is a good thing*, and from their respectful distance they want to be part of it.

4. (4c) *The Shulamite enters the king's chamber.*

**The king has brought me into his chambers.**

a. **The king**: This is another line that seems to reinforce the point that this is Solomon, inviting the young maiden into the private rooms of his palace.

b. **The king has brought me into his chambers**: However, because it does not seem that their love is yet consummated, this reference to **his chambers** may well be poetic and symbolic, in the sense of "He has welcomed me into the affections and secrets of his heart."

5. (4d) *The Daughters of Jerusalem remark on the couple and their love.*

**We will be glad and rejoice in you.**

**We will remember your love more than wine.**

a. **We will be glad and rejoice in you**: The Daughters of Jerusalem rightly saw this passionate love as something to celebrate. It was *good* – not simply fun or exciting and should be recognized as such.

b. **We will remember your love more than wine**: Another phrase remarking on the beauty and goodness of their love.

6. (4e-6) *The Shulamite considers her own shortcomings in appearance.*

**Rightly do they love you.**

**I *am* dark, but lovely,**

**O daughters of Jerusalem,**

**Like the tents of Kedar,**

**Like the curtains of Solomon.**

**Do not look upon me, because I *am* dark,**



**Because the sun has tanned me.  
My mother's sons were angry with me;  
They made me the keeper of the vineyards,  
But my own vineyard I have not kept.**

a. **Rightly do they love you. I am dark:** Hearing the words of the Daughters of Jerusalem in the previous lines, the maiden considers that their high estimation of her beloved is appropriate (**Rightly do they love you**). Yet of herself, she feels that her deeply tanned appearance (**I am dark... like the tents of Kedar**) makes her less worthy of their praise and (presumably) of her beloved's attention.

i. The maiden was happy that the character of her beloved was good and could be seen as so. "Because his character was so attractive, the girl who will someday be his bride can confidently say that the women of the court *rightly* appreciate him. After they praise him, she must agree, 'Rightly do they love you.'" (Glickman)

ii. This well-deserved (**rightly**) respect others had for the young man showed that the maiden made a wise choice. "She should not be so infatuated that she imagines a scoundrel or knave to be her knight in shining armor. She should be able to say, 'rightly do I love you.' He should be the kind of person one ought to respect." (Glickman)

iii. Marriage-eligible women today should have the same perspective, considering that the Apostle Paul summarized the responsibility of a wife towards her husband in Eph 5:33 with one word: *respect*. Though it is common – in the words of a modern film – for women to select a man for who he *almost is*, or to choose him for the man *she can make him to be*, this is unwise. An unmarried woman should ask herself

the serious question: "Can I genuinely respect this man as he is right now? Do I respect him enough to submit to him the way the Bible says a wife should submit?" The maiden of the Song of Solomon had already asked and answered this question.

b. **I am dark, but lovely:** The self-doubt the maiden had regarding her own appearance should not be overstated. She did feel, in some ways, unattractive and unworthy (**Do not look upon me, because I am dark**). Yet at the same time she could say she is **lovely**.

i. **Look not upon me:** "This is an attitude very common to early Christian life. We do not want our natural life to be exposed at all. Thus, before being sufficiently dealt with by the Holy Spirit, immature believers will tend to hide from others. They do not wish to be known as they really are." (Nee)

c. **Because the sun has tanned me:** Perhaps it is best to say that she saw herself as fundamentally **lovely**, yet marred by her prolonged exposure in the sun, transforming her more fair skin into darker, deeply tanned skin.

i. **Like the tents of Kedar:** "Kedar was a territory southeast of Damascus where the Bedouin roamed. Their tents were made of the skins of black goats." (Kinlaw)

ii. In that day (as in most of history), fair skin was considered more attractive than tanned skin, because it showed that one was of a financial or social status high enough to where they did not have to perform outdoor work; they lived a higher life than that of simple farmers.

iii. The manner in which primarily allegorical interpreters deal with the line, **because the sun has**

**tanned me**, demonstrates the weakness of the primarily allegorical approach. Trapp discusses how some think that **the sun** represents the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, and how in His brilliance the church sees its own nothingness. Or, he says that **the sun** might represent original sin. But he thinks the best understanding is to see **the sun** as “the heat of persecution, and the parching of oppression.”

d. **My mother’s sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards**: Worse still for the maiden, her unattractive appearance was unjustly forced upon her by her stepbrothers. Somewhat as a “Cinderella” figure, she was forced to work by cruel relatives.

i. The maiden seems to make – or at least almost makes – the mistake of thinking that her hardships have disfigured her and make her less qualified to be truly loved. Instead, “She has a natural attractiveness to her and a certain humility which often only suffering can bring. No doubt genuineness and humility were refreshing changes to the king.” (Glickman)

e. **But my own vineyard I have not kept**: She worked hard in this unjust labor, while neglecting her own appearance. In this she well represents the thinking of many women who consider themselves not attractive enough to be truly and passionately loved. She should not believe the lie that her hardships have made her less attractive to a good man.

i. There is an old story about a thief who broke into a department store and stole nothing; but he switched the price tags. The next day an expensive Swiss watch was marked as being worth \$1.50; a fine leather handbag was marked for \$1.75. A simple

rubber ball for a child was marked for \$150.00 and three pencils were marked for \$175.00. If people bought or sold at those prices, you would think they were crazy. Yet *all the time* people value precious attributes and characteristics in other people very cheaply (especially when it comes to love and romance), and they assign high value to attributes and characteristics that are actually worth little.

## **B. Endearing words between young lovers.**

1. (7) *The Shulamite speaks to her beloved.*

**Tell me, O you whom I love,  
Where you feed *your flock*,  
Where you make *it* rest at noon.  
For why should I be as one who veils herself  
By the flocks of your companions?**

a. **Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock:** Here the beloved is pictured as a shepherd, which was presumably a symbolic representation, perhaps touching on the idea common in the ancient world that the king was like a shepherd to his people. Yet the picture is clear: she wanted to know where her beloved was, because she simply wanted to be *with him*.

i. This picture of a shepherd is one reason why some think that the Song of Solomon is actually a drama with a distinction between Solomon the king and the beloved who is also a simple shepherd. On balance, it seems best to regard this simply as a poetic description of Solomon the king, who was also the beloved.

b. **For why should I be as one who veils herself:** Here the maiden proclaims her modesty, because in that culture a *veiled woman* was a woman of low sexual morals. She didn't want to make herself look like a loose

girl following the **flocks** looking for any lover; therefore, she wanted to know where her beloved was. She didn't want *a* man; she wanted *her* man, her *special* man, her beloved.

i. Gen 38:13-15 tells us that when Tamar, the widow of the sons of Judah wanted to entrap her father-in-law Judah by posing as a prostitute, she *covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place*. This was making herself available as a prostitute.

ii. "In their culture this term, 'a veiled woman,' referred to a loose girl, likely a prostitute. If she were going to see the king, she wanted it to be at the proper time and place – say, for example, when he was free in the middle of the day. She didn't want to go wandering around looking for him, appearing to be an aggressive and available prostitute to everyone else." (Glickman)

iii. In this the maiden shows that she is both *humble* (in that she doesn't want to make an ostentatious search for her beloved) and she has *integrity*, not wanting to even *appear* like one of these "loose girls." She understood that when it comes to sexual attraction and reputation, what others think *does* matter.

2. (8-10) *The beloved praises his lover.*

**If you do not know, O fairest among women,  
Follow in the footsteps of the flock,  
And feed your little goats  
Beside the shepherds' tents.  
I have compared you, my love,  
To my filly among Pharaoh's chariots.  
Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,  
Your neck with chains *of gold*.**

a. **If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock:** Poetically, the beloved tells the maiden where she can find him – just follow the flocks. He welcomes her presence and companionship and is happy to have her with him.

b. **To my filly among Pharaoh's chariots:** Historical studies set this phrase in an interesting light. Normally, we would think of a beautiful **filly**, magnificently drawing **Pharaoh's chariots**. Yet there are ancient sources that indicate that by strict rule, **Pharaoh's chariots** were pulled by *stallions*, not fillies, mares, or geldings. This then would have the sense that the maiden was as alluring and exciting as a filly among stallions.

i. Estes describes the more conventional view: "Solomon's mare was his pride and joy. It was the most beautiful and graceful horse in the kingdom. It had been specially selected to draw the king's chariot... only one horse was good enough for Solomon. The meaning of the comparison is obvious; other women may be fine, but Shulamith was the only one Solomon prized." (Estes)

ii. Yet it seems that by the middle of the second millennium before Christ – well before the time of Solomon – the custom was established that only two stallions pulled the chariot of Pharaoh (according to Carr and others). Here, the man describes his wife as a **filly among Pharaoh's chariots**, which probably means that she had the same sexual attraction that a mare loose among stallions would have.

c. **Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold:** The beloved praised the beauty of the maiden in general (as in Son 1:15). Here, more specifically, he praised the way that she made

herself beautiful, with **ornaments** on her **cheeks** and **chains of gold** on her **neck**.

3. (11) *The daughters of Jerusalem offer gifts to the Shulamite.*

**We will make you ornaments of gold  
With studs of silver.**

a. **We will make you ornaments of gold:** The on-looking daughters of Jerusalem wanted to bless the maiden also. When they saw how the king cared for her, they wanted to be kind and good to her also.

i. This is one reason why it is important to a woman that her man treat her well and treat her well in public. She instinctively understands that others will treat her better if they see that her man values her and treats her well.

b. **Ornaments of gold with studs of silver:** This shows how greatly they responded to the example set by the beloved. His treatment of the maiden made them want to be somewhat extravagant in honoring the maiden.

i. "In all probability, she was not in actual possession of any of these items. Rather, they are similes that express her sweet feelings toward her lover." (Carr)

4. (12-14) *The Shulamite describes how precious her beloved is to her.*

**While the king *is* at his table,  
My spikenard sends forth its fragrance.  
A bundle of myrrh *is* my beloved to me,  
That lies all night between my breasts.  
My beloved *is* to me a cluster of henna *blooms*  
In the vineyards of En Gedi.**

a. **While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance:** The maiden was aware of her attractive powers, and how her attractiveness could draw her beloved (**the king**) to herself. This is clearly a woman who is aware of her sexual attractiveness but uses it in a godly and responsible manner; not for casual flirtation or questionable liaisons.

b. **A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me:** The maiden understood her ability to attract her beloved; and she also understood his ability to attract her. This dynamic of mutual romantic and sexual attraction is wonderful in the context of a concern for character and corresponding commitment; it is a dangerous dynamic outside this context.

c. **That lies all night between my breasts:** The idea is that the presence and scent of her beloved stayed with her, even when the maiden was alone. The thought of her lover is like a fragrance that stays with her and sustains her, even when he is not there.

i. "Shulamith was explaining that even while she slept alone at night, Solomon's love continued to enrich and nourish her life." (Estes)

ii. This speaks to the sense of *security* that his love gives to her. Since she is secure in his love, he doesn't need to be immediately there for her to be blessed and benefited by it.

d. **Between my breasts:** This reference to the female breast – made by the maiden herself – makes some readers and commentators of the Song of Solomon uncomfortable. There is a reflexive instinct to believe that God *must* have had something else in mind; something more *spiritual*.



i. "Jewish scholars have seen in the bride's breasts Moses and Aaron; the two Messiahs, Messiah Son of David and Messiah son of Ephraim; Moses and Phinehas; and Joshua and Eleazar. Christian interpreters have been equally ingenious. They have seen the bride's breasts as the church from which we feed; the two testaments, Old and New; the twin precepts of love of God and neighbor; and the Blood and the Water. Gregory of Nyssa found in them the outer and the inner man, united in one sentient being." (Kinlaw)

d. **In the vineyards of En Gedi:** The place known as **En Gedi** is a famous oasis in the Judean wilderness, lush with water and life in an otherwise barren place. **A cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of En Gedi** would be alive, beautiful, healthy, and full of good scents.

i. "The king was En-Gedi to this girl, an oasis of life in a desert of monotony, and like a weary traveler she found refreshment with him." (Glickman)

5. (15) *The Beloved praises the beauty of the Shulamite.*

**Behold, you are fair, my love!**

**Behold, you are fair!**

**You have dove's eyes.**

a. **Behold, you are fair, my love:** With both the intensity of the words and their repetition, we see that the beloved lavished praise upon the maiden for her beauty. It was important for him to say and for her to hear; *she was beautiful to him.*

b. **You have dove's eyes:** He especially noted the beauty in her eyes. It is true that some women have beautiful eyes by birth; yet there is something wonderful about the beauty of spirit that is seen in the eyes. A

woman deeply in love with God has a particular beauty in her **eyes**.

- i. "The large and beautiful dove of Syria is supposed to be here referred to, the eyes of which are remarkably fine." (Clarke)

6. (16-17) *The Shulamite responds with kind words.*

**Behold, you are handsome, my beloved!**

**Yes, pleasant!**

**Also our bed is green.**

**The beams of our houses are cedar,**

**And our rafters of fir.**

a. **Behold, you are handsome, my beloved:** The maiden loved and respected the character of her **beloved** (Son 1:3); yet she was also attracted to his appearance. This was no doubt because the **beloved** was and made himself **handsome**; but also, because she saw him through a woman's eyes of love, which undeniably make a man better looking.

- i. She is clearly responding to *his* previous expressions of love. "He calls her 'beautiful' (1:15); she responds with the masculine form of the same Hebrew word (1:16)." (Kinlaw)

b. **The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir:** The image is as if they are on a walk in the country, and they use the plants and scenes around them as pictures of their love and relationship.

**Son 2:1** I am only a wild flower in Sharon, a lily in a mountain valley.

Son 2:2 Like a lily among thorns is my darling among women.

Son 2:3 Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my dearest compared to other men. I love to sit in its shadow, and its fruit is sweet to my taste.

Son 2:4 He brought me to his banquet hall and raised the banner of love over me.

Son 2:5 Restore my strength with raisins and refresh me with apples! I am weak from passion.

Son 2:6 His left hand is under my head, and his right hand caresses me.

Son 2:7 Promise me, women of Jerusalem; swear by the swift deer and the gazelles that you will not interrupt our love.

### **The Bride Adores Her Beloved**

Son 2:8 I hear my lover's voice. He comes running over the mountains, racing across the hills to me.

Son 2:9 My lover is like a gazelle, like a young stag. There he stands beside the wall. He looks in through the window and glances through the lattice.

Son 2:10 My lover speaks to me. Come then, my love; my darling, come with me.

Son 2:11 The winter is over; the rains have stopped;

Son 2:12 in the countryside the flowers are in bloom. This is the time for singing; the song of doves is heard in the fields.

Son 2:13 Figs are beginning to ripen; the air is fragrant with blossoming vines. Come then, my love; my darling, come with me.

Son 2:14 You are like a dove that hides in the crevice of a rock. Let me see your lovely face and hear your enchanting voice.

Son 2:15 Catch the foxes, the little foxes, before they ruin our vineyard in bloom.

Son 2:16 My lover is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies

Son 2:17 until the morning breezes blow and the darkness disappears. Return, my darling, like a gazelle, like a stag on

the mountains of Bether.

## **Song of Solomon 2:1-17**

### **Song of Solomon 2 - "My Beloved Is Mine and I Am His"**

**A. The maiden and her beloved continue to praise each other.**

*1. (1) The maiden describes herself to her beloved.*

**I am the rose of Sharon,  
And the lily of the valleys.**

a. **I am the rose of Sharon:** Her view of herself has remarkably changed. In the first visits at the palace, she was self-conscious and unsure of her appearance and worth. Now she says, "**I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.**"

i. This is a line that commonly is attributed to the beloved, and then allegorically applied to Jesus Christ. Therefore, "Rose of Sharon" or "Lily of the Valley" is in many writings, songs, and minds a poetic title for Jesus Christ, reflecting His great beauty and glory. Unfortunately, this is a decidedly wrong understanding; these words are rightly attributed to the maiden in the New King James translation.

ii. Spurgeon was one who took this mistaken approach to the text and considered the idea of Jesus proclaiming His own beauty and greatness to us: "If a man praises his wares, it is that he may sell them. If a doctor advertises his cures, it is that other sick folk may be induced to try his medicine; and when our Lord Jesus Christ praises himself, it is a kind of holy advertisement by which he would tempt us to 'come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' If he praises himself, it is that we may fall in love with

him; and we need not be afraid to come and lay our poor hearts at his feet, and ask him to accept us." We might say that this is a wonderful point made from a misapplied text.

**b. The rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys:**

She describes herself not as two flowers; yet they are two fairly commonplace wildflowers. She regarded herself as a flower (definitely having beauty), but as rather plain flowers (not remarkable compared to others).

i. According to Trapp, the Septuagint translates **rose of Sharon** as *flower of the field*. We do know that **the rose of Sharon** describes not a proper rose, but a flower found in *the Sharon*, the low coastal plain stretching south from Mount Carmel in the northern part of Israel. The word translated **rose** here actually means "to form bulbs." Some think it refers to the bulb-like fruit produced by a rose bush, the rose hips. Yet according to Carr, "The general consensus is that the plant described here is one of the bulb family. Crocus, narcissus, iris, daffodil are the usual candidates."

ii. "*Sharon* was a very fruitful place, where David's cattle were fed, 1Ch 27:29. It is mentioned as a place of excellence, Isa 35:2, and as a place of flocks, Isa 65:10." (Clarke)

iii. "The *lily of the valleys* is not our common white, bell-shaped plant of that name... Some commentators, on the basis of Son 5:13, argue for a red or reddish-purple colour for the flower, but no identification is certain." (Carr)

iv. "Thus the Bride's description of herself was really self-depreciatory, rather than otherwise. It was as if she saw that there was nothing in her beauty extraordinary or out of the common." (Morgan)

2. (2) *The beloved responds to the maiden.*

**Like a lily among the thorns,  
So is my love among the daughters.**

a. **Like a lily:** The beloved heard the maiden's almost confident self-description and responded with affirmation. Perhaps she said it with a touch of doubt, and he erased any doubt with his response.

i. Whatever the maiden might feel, *he* had no doubt about her beauty. "To the man, the wonder of his beloved is ever that she is full of beauty." (Morgan)

b. **Like a lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters:** The beloved added that the maiden was not only beautiful, but that she was also among those who didn't appreciate (or match) her beauty. The beloved gave his maiden a precious gift: the gift of feeling *preferred*. In his estimation, she was the flower and the other girls were just thorns.

i. "She is a *lily* indeed, but her beauty far surpasses the thorny weeds all around her." (Carr)

ii. "The bridegroom had just before called her *fair*; she with a becoming modesty, represents her beauty as nothing extraordinary, and compares herself to a *common flower of the field*. This, in the warmth of his affection, he denies, insisting that she as much surpasses all other maidens as the flower of the *lily* does the *bramble*." (Clarke)

3. (3) *The maiden enjoys the loving presence of her beloved.*

**Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods,  
So is my beloved among the sons.  
I sat down in his shade with great delight,  
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.**

**a. Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods:**

The language of trees and plants continues, now with the maiden describing her beloved as being like a large, healthy, life-giving **apple tree**.

i. "A humble wildflower herself, she recognizes her Bridegroom as a noble tree, alike ornamental and fruitful." (Taylor) Yet it is unlikely that Solomon had what we know as an apple tree in mind. "By the apple tree would probably be intended by the oriental writer either the citron, or the pomegranate, or the orange. I suppose he did not refer to the apple tree of our gardens, for it would scarcely be known to him." (Spurgeon)

ii. We sense the couple is busy complimenting each other. "I'm a simple wildflower." "No, you are a wildflower among the thorns." "You are like a beautiful apple tree" and so on.

**b. I sat down in his shade with great delight:** The maiden found a great sense of security and peace under the protective covering of her beloved. She felt sheltered and shaded; that she was no longer at the mercy of others, but now under his care.

i. Her feeling of security is directly connected to his openly proclaimed preference of her in the previous verse. She is not at the mercy of a man who might choose another woman at the slightest whim; she can feel secure in the love of a man who genuinely prefers her.

ii. "Whereas before she came to him she worked long hours in the sun (1:6), now she rests under the protective shade that he brings. And although formerly she was so exhausted by her work she could not properly care for herself, now she finds time for refreshment with him." (Glickman)

iii. **Sweet to my taste:** "*Taste* is more correctly *palate*, often including the lips, teeth, and the whole mouth. The Hebrew word for *discipline* or *training* (*hanak*) is derived from the same root. The first step in teaching a child is the anointing of his lips with honey so that learning is identified with sweetness." (Carr)

iv. Spurgeon gave an allegorical application to the idea of the maiden (representing God's people) resting under the shade of her beloved (representing Jesus): "Straightway she sat down under its shadow, with great delight, and its fruit was sweet unto her taste. She looked up at it; that was the first thing she did, and she perceived that it met her double want. The sun was hot, there was the shadow: she was faint, there was the fruit. Now, see how Jesus meets all the wants of all who come to him."

## **B. The maiden muses over her love relationship with her beloved.**

*In this section (Son 2:4-17) the maiden – either in a dream or daydream – thinks about her beloved and the love they have shared and will share. The dialogue seems to completely belong to her in this section.*

*1. (4-7) The maiden thinks about the provision and intimacy she has found.*

**He brought me to the banqueting house,  
And his banner over me was love.  
Sustain me with cakes of raisins,  
Refresh me with apples,  
For I *am* lovesick.  
His left hand *is* under my head,  
And his right hand embraces me.  
I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the does of the field,**



**Do not stir up nor awaken love  
Until it pleases.**

a. **He has brought me to the banqueting house:** The maiden dreamily thinks of her beloved bringing her to a special place, the **banqueting house** – which is more literally “house of wine,” either in the sense of storage or production. It seems to be a secluded, outdoorsy place where the maiden and her beloved could be together and eventually be intimate.

i. “Idiomatically, the ‘house of wine’ could be the place where wine is grown (*i.e.* a vineyard), manufactured, stored, or consumed. The frequent use of the outdoor motifs in the Song, particularly of the garden as a place for the lovers’ rendezvous, suggests that the vineyard itself is what is intended here.” (Carr)

ii. “Literally, *the house of wine*. The ancients preserved their wine, not in barrels or dark cellars under ground, as we do, but in large *pitchers*, ranged against the wall in some upper apartment in the house, the place where they kept their most precious effects.” (Clarke)

b. **His banner over me was love:** Taken more literally, this is a strange statement. Taken more poetically, the maiden rejoices that her beloved and publicly and openly proclaimed his love for her, as if he had set up a **banner** or flag to say it.

i. “She is proclaiming that the love which the king has for her is evident to everyone. He does not say one thing to her in private and contradict that in public... He is not ashamed of his love for her, so he is glad for all to see it.” (Glickman)

ii. “‘His banner over me was love’ suggests that the hoisting of this banner by her focuses the whole

attention on love. It is a love relationship.” (Nee)

iii. “He is not ashamed to acknowledge her publicly... The house of wine is now as appropriate as the King’s chambers were. Fearlessly and without shame she can sit at His side, His acknowledged spouse, the bride of His choice.” (Taylor)

c. **Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples:** She thought of enjoying food with her beloved in their outdoor rendezvous. Some commentators associate these foods with pagan fertility rites or aphrodisiac qualities, but this seems unwarranted and unnecessary.

d. **I am lovesick:** The maiden described a feeling familiar to many who have known the thrill of romantic love. She feels physically weak and perhaps even somewhat disoriented because of the strength of attraction and infatuation she has towards her beloved.

i. According to Dr. Jeffrey Schloss, there is a brain hormone that mediates the feeling of being in love or being infatuated. One of these neurotransmitters is known as *phenethylamine*, and it floods our brain when we fall in love (it is also in fairly high quantities in chocolate). This chemical gives us feelings of exhilaration and thrill and well-being, and in high amounts can lead to a loss of appetite. This chemical works somewhat in a cycle, at least in a relationship. At the beginning of the relationship it spikes up; after four or five years it begins to decline. Across cultures there is a spike in the rate of divorce at about 4.5 years of marriage.

ii. This leads some scientists to say that we are made for monogamy, but only in the sense of one partner at a time, and then changing partners every five years or so. Yet Dr. Schloss says that we know this is

not true. In the brain there are completely different pathways, with completely different chemical mediators. These begin to form at about the four-year point in a relationship, and they contribute to different feelings. Instead of feelings of thrill and “I can’t eat,” they are feelings of deep contentment and gratitude. One of the chemicals that mediates these feeling is *oxytocin*, which is the same chemical related to the bonding of a mother together with her infant.

iii. Some suggest that relationships have two major phases: *attraction* and *attachment*. The attraction phase is powerful, and the kind of condition that makes one say, “**I am lovesick.**” Yet the key to a long-term fulfilling relationship is staying with it past the *attraction* phase into the *attachment* phase. There are some counselors who devote almost their entire counseling practice trying to help what they call “love junkies”; people who are so addicted to the *phenethylamine* phase that they bounce from relationship rush to relationship rush without ever really coming into a greater, longer lasting relationship fulfillment.

iv. One could say that we are engineered for the longer lasting *attachment* phase, and the *attraction* phase is meant to be a portal into the attachment phase, and not something unto itself. The good news is that as a relationship moves into the attachment phase, the attraction phase recycles, and long-married couples often experience the sense of falling in love all over again – several times through their marriage.

v. This is why it is sometimes – or often – unwise to rush ahead in a relationship when it is still in the “**I am lovesick,**” attraction and *phenethylamine* phase.

Adam Clarke observed of the **lovesick** person: "But while we admit such a person's sincerity, who can help questioning his judgment?"

vi. Watchman Nee applied this idea to the believer's relationship with God: "'Sick with love' is lovesickness, and is the equivalent of being exhausted with happiness. Such was the experience of the saints of all ages when they came into a full realization of the Lord's special presence."

e. **His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me:** The maiden imagines herself and her beloved lying together and her beloved caressing her with **his right hand** (perhaps intimately).

i. **Embraces me:** "The word is not frequent in the Old Testament, and is used both of friendly greeting (Gen 48:10) and of sexual union (Pro 5:20).'" (Carr)

ii. "The position of the left hand *under* her head would suggest that the two are lying down and that with the right hand he is enfolding and caressing her." (Carr)

iii. "Enraptured in her love, Shulamith invited Solomon to enjoy her sexually. The language that she used here appears again in 4:6 and 8:14 in contexts that definitely refer to physical intimacy." (Estes)

iv. Since the maiden describes a dream or daydream, this describes her desire and not an action. "Here perhaps the RSV translation of Son 2:6 is preferable: 'O that his left hand were under my head, and that his right hand embraced me!'" (Kinlaw)

f. **I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem:** This exhortation to the **daughters of Jerusalem** is another reminder that this section (Son 2:4-17) is to be understood as a dream or daydream of the maiden. We are not to imagine the couple together in the intimacy

described in the previous lines (**his right hand embraces me**) with the **daughters of Jerusalem** standing around and taking note.

i. Yet here in her dream-like state, the maiden speaks to these imagined on looking **daughters of Jerusalem** and pleads with them (**I charge you**), vowing (or perhaps swearing) **by the gazelles or by the does of the field**. This poetic phrasing surely sounded more natural and meaningful to the first readers of the Song of Solomon than it does to us.

ii. "The adjuration which she used is a choice specimen of oriental poetry: she charges them, not as we should prosaically do, by everything that is sacred and true, but 'by the roes, and by the hinds of the field.'" (Spurgeon)

**g. Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases:**

There are two meanings to the phrase in general. It could be, "Don't interrupt the sweet dream of love the maiden enjoys, drawing her back to the reality of daily life." Or it could be, "Don't start the process of loving exchange until the opportunity and appropriate occasion is present; don't start something unless we can complete it."

i. The idea is both plain and powerful. The maiden wants none of the onlookers to hinder or interrupt their love until it is fulfilled and consummated. We may say this is true both in the sense of their *relationship* and in the sense of their *passion*.

ii. In terms of relationship it means, "Let our love progress and grow until it is matured and fruitful, making a genuinely pleasing relationship – *don't let us go too fast*." "From her wish, an excellent principle can be drawn for courtship. A strong desire to express love physically should be present, but not until

marriage should it be fulfilled. This restraint is healthy and beneficial to the couple.” (Glickman) It is like letting a flower grow until it naturally blooms, instead of trying to force a flower to grow and blossom. This isn’t *repression* – the rejection and denial of the feelings, often in shame; this is *suppression* – the conscious restraint of natural impulses and desires.

iii. In terms of passion it means, “Let our love making continue without interruption until we are both fulfilled. Don’t let us start until we can go all the way.”

2. (8-14) *The maiden happily thinks over a visit from her beloved.*

**The voice of my beloved!**

**Behold, he comes**

**Leaping upon the mountains,**

**Skiping upon the hills.**

**My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.**

**Behold, he stands behind our wall;**

**He is looking through the windows,**

**Gazing through the lattice.**

**My beloved spoke, and said to me:**

**“Rise up, my love, my fair one,**

**And come away.**

**For lo, the winter is past,**

**The rain is over *and* gone.**

**The flowers appear on the earth;**

**The time of singing has come,**

**And the voice of the turtledove**

**Is heard in our land.**

**The fig tree puts forth her green figs,**

**And the vines *with* the tender grapes**

**Give a good smell.**

**Rise up, my love, my fair one,**

**And come away!**

**"O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,  
In the secret *places* of the cliff,  
Let me see your face,  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice *is* sweet,  
And your face *is* lovely."**

a. **The voice of my beloved:** Here the maiden moved to another scene in her dream or daydream. Before she imagined herself and her beloved at an outdoor rendezvous (Son 2:4-7). Now she imagines a visit from her **beloved**, beginning with the idea that she is awakened or alerted by the sound of his **voice**.

b. **Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains:** The maiden imagined her beloved bounding to come meet her, full of energy and excitement, as if he were a **gazelle or a young stag**.

c. **Behold he stands behind our wall; he is looking through the windows:** The maiden imagined her beloved peering through the windows to see if his maiden was home.

i. "He was seen first *behind the wall*, and then in the *court*; and lastly came to the *window* of his bride's chamber." (Clarke)

d. **Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away:** The maiden thought of her beloved inviting her out to enjoy the glory of spring, with the **rain... over and gone** and beautiful **flowers** and birds **singing**.

i. "The season of spring reflects the experience of the young lovers. Everything is fresh; new life flows through the world; happiness and color triumph over winter's boring grays. Whenever any couple falls in love, it is spring for them." (Glickman)

ii. **Voice of the turtledove:** "This species is primarily a migratory spring/summer resident of Palestine (*cf. Jer 8:7*), whose distinctive cooing call is one of the signs of spring." (Carr)

iii. **The fig tree puts forth her green figs:** "The fig tree in Judea bears *double* crops; the first of which is ripe in *spring*. But the tree, as I have elsewhere observed, bears figs all the year through, in the climes congenial to it. That is, the fig tree has always *ripe* or *unripe* fruit on it. I never saw a healthy tree naked." (Clark)

e. **Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away:** The maiden dreamt of her beloved *insisting* that they enjoy the beauty of spring together. It was important for her to know that he *really* wanted to do this with her and did not do it reluctantly, as if he were simply willing to make himself miserable if it could please her. It was important for her to know that he really did simply want to *be with her*.

f. **O my dove... let me see your face:** The maiden imagined these sweet, impassioned words from her beloved (though it is also possible that she expressed them towards him). She dreamt that her special man would seek her out (**in the secret places of the cliff**) and would embrace her as someone **lovely** and beautiful.

i. **My dove:** "This word, here a pet name for the beloved... is the common Rock Dove, not the turtledove... the dove is a common symbol of love (the 'lovebird')." (Carr)

ii. **Let me see your face,** or more literally *appearance*. "He wants to feast his eyes on the loveliness of her whole person, and fill his ears with the pleasing sweetness of her



voice.” (Carr)

g. **For your voice is sweet:** The maiden considered how **sweet** and meaningful the sound of one’s voice is between two lovers. She imagined her beloved longing to hear her voice and remembering how **sweet** the sound of it is.

i. The human voice has the amazing ability to communicate and connect. “The voice can invite or discourage intimacy, without ever having to be verbally explicit, or even conscious of what it is doing... We use our voices to repel and attract, encourage or undermine. As animals with smell, so are humans with voices.” (Anne Karpf, *The Human Voice*)

ii. Just hearing a human voice can give us information about a person’s height, weight, shape, sex, age, occupation, sexual orientation, health, sobriety, tiredness, social class, race, education, financial status, and truthfulness. With all this power wrapped up in the voice, no wonder the maiden imagined her beloved saying to her, “**your voice is sweet.**”

3. (15) *The maiden’s brothers warn of the “**little foxes.**”*

**Catch us the foxes,  
The little foxes that spoil the vines,  
For our vines *have* tender grapes.**

a. **Catch us the foxes:** It is somewhat difficult to understand who says these words, and to whom they are said. The translators of the New King James Version attribute them to the maiden’s brothers; many others believe these words come from the maiden herself and are spoken to her beloved. The plural nature of the statement is clear; the idea is that **the foxes** will be

caught together with another person (the brothers or the beloved), and not by one person working alone.

i. "This verse is a problem. The verb form is imperative, masculine plural, but there is no indication whether the speaker is male or female. All that is clear is that 'for us' is plural." (Carr)

b. **The little foxes that spoil the vines:** Clearly the maiden speaks poetically here, using the **little foxes** as emblems of that which would damage the love relationship she shares with her beloved. The idea is that their relationship is like a fruitful vineyard and the **little foxes** will damage the vineyard unless they are stopped and caught.

i. Glickman lists several "little foxes" that may trouble couples:

- Uncontrolled desire that drives a wedge of guilt and mistrust between the couple.
- Mistrust and jealousy that strains or breaks the bond of love.
- Selfishness and pride that refuses to acknowledge wrong and fault to one another.
- An unforgiving attitude that will not accept an apology.

ii. It is helpful to remember the wording of the verse: **catch us the foxes**. The job of catching foxes is *teamwork*. One partner in the relationship can't expect the other do it all.

iii. Hudson Taylor thought of the "**little foxes**" that may ruin our relationship with Jesus Christ. "The enemies may be small, but the mischief done great... And how numerous the little foxes are! Little compromises with the world; disobedience to the still

small voice in little things; little indulgences of the flesh to the neglect of duty; little strokes of policy; doing evil in little things that good may come; and the beauty, and the fruitfulness of the vine are sacrificed!”

c. **For our vines have tender grapes:** The maiden’s idea is that their relationship is both especially precious (**tender grapes** are best) and vulnerable, needing protection (**tender grapes** need to be guarded).

i. “The appeal is made here to outsiders to prevent ‘the foxes,’ those forces that could destroy the purity of their love, from defiling their vineyards, which are blossoming... So they plead for protection for the love that blossoms between them that nothing will spoil it.” (Kinlaw)

ii. Thinking allegorically, Spurgeon considered aspects in the life of the believer that were like **tender grapes** that were in danger of being spoiled by the **little foxes**. He considered these to be **tender grapes** in the life of the believer:

- A secret mourning for sin.
- A humble faith in Jesus Christ.
- A genuine change of life.
- A life of secret devotion.
- An eager desire for more grace.
- A simple love to Jesus.

iii. “If you have any sign of spiritual life, if you have any tender grapes upon your branches, the devil and his foxes will be sure to be at you; therefore, endeavor to get as close as ever you can to two persons who are mentioned hard by my text, namely, the King and his spouse. First, keep close to Christ for

this is your life; and next, keep close to his Church,  
for this is your comfort." (Spurgeon)

4. (16-17) *The maiden thinks about her beloved.*

*Charles Spurgeon preached eight sermons on these two verses.*

**My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his.  
He feeds *his* flock among the lilies.  
Until the day breaks  
And the shadows flee away,  
Turn, my beloved,  
And be like a gazelle  
Or a young stag  
Upon the mountains of Bether.**

a. **My beloved is mine, and I am his:** The maiden concludes this dreamy section confident in the bond that joins her and her beloved. He belongs to her, and she belongs to him. In this sense they are *one*, joined together with mutual bonds of affection, and not one partner clinging to another more reluctant partner.

i. It is also a statement of *exclusivity* and *preference*. They are *not* saying, "My beloved is mine, and I belong to him and a few other guys," nor "I am my beloved's and he is mine and he also belongs to 999 other women."

ii. Many people think the key to love is finding the perfect person; it is more a matter of finding the person who belongs to you, and you belong to them. "You don't look at the other person as a status symbol who will raise your prestige... you look at that one as your counterpart, the one who completes you, the one with whom you can joyfully affirm your belongingness." (Glickman)

iii. These lines have been repeatedly allegorically applied to the relationship between Jesus and His people. Charles Spurgeon preached eight sermons on Son 2:16-17, and in one of them titled *The Interest of Christ and His People in Each Other*, he meditated on the meaning of each aspect.

iv. Ways that I belong to Jesus; ways that **"I am my beloved's"**:

- I am His by the gift of His Father.
- I am His by purchase, paid for by His own life.
- I am His by conquest, He fought for me and won me.
- I am His by surrender, because I gave myself to Him.

"Blessed be God, this is true *evermore* — 'I am his,' his to-day, in the house of worship, and his to-morrow in the house of business; his as a singer in the sanctuary, and his as a toiler in the workshop; his when I am preaching, and equally his when I am walking the streets; his while I live, his when I die; his when my soul ascends and my body lies mouldering in the grave; the whole personality of my manhood is altogether his for ever and for ever." (Spurgeon)

v. Ways that Jesus belongs to me; ways that **"He is mine"**:

- He is mine by connection in the same body; He is the head and I am part of His body.
- He is mine by affectionate relationship; He has given me His love.
- He is mine by the connection of birth; I am born again of Him.

- He is mine by choice; He gave Himself for me.
- He is mine by indwelling; He has decided to live inside me.
- He is mine personally, He is mine eternally.
- "It certainly does seem a great thing to call him mine; to think that he should ever be mine, and that all he is, and all he has, and all he says, and all he does, and all he ever will be, is all mine. When a wife takes a husband to be hers, he becomes all hers, and she reckons that she has no divided possession in him; and it certainly is so with thee, dear heart, if Christ be thine." (Spurgeon)

vi. "Which is the greater miracle — that he should be mine, or that I should be his?" (Spurgeon)

**b. He feeds his flock among the lilies:** Lips are called **lilies** in Son 5:13; the maiden probably dreamt of being smothered by kisses all through the night (**until the day breaks**).

i. "She is ready for him to 'graze' on her lips as sheep 'browse' on the lush grasses... Perhaps this is to be related to the opening wish of our young lady (Son 1:2)."

ii. Other commentators see something far less physically intimate: "She is drawing attention to his shepherd role wherein he would pasture his flock. And by this she emphasizes his shepherd-like qualities of strength and gentleness." (Glickman)

**c. Turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag:** The maiden dreamt of her beloved full of energy and virility, like a strong young **gazelle** or **stag**.

i. **The mountains of Bethel** are very hard to identify. "The verbal root occurs twice in Gen 15:10,

where the meaning is obviously to divide an animal in a sacrificial ritual.” (Carr) Therefore, the Jerusalem Bible translates this, *mountains of the covenant*.

ii. The phrase can also be translated, *mountains of division*. If this is the case, the thought may be that maiden longs for her beloved to **turn** and overcome the *mountains of division* as easily as if he were a **gazelle or a young stag**.

iii. “The spouse speaks of ‘mountains’ dividing her from her Beloved: she means that *the difficulties were great*. They were not little hills, but mountains, that closed up her way... It is plain, from this sacred Canticle, that the spouse may love and be loved, may be confident in her Lord, and be fully assured of her possession of him, and yet, there may for the present be mountains between her and him.” (Spurgeon)

### **The Bride's Dream**

**Son 3:1** Asleep on my bed, night after night I dreamed of the one I love; I was looking for him, but couldn't find him.

Son 3:2 I went wandering through the city, through its streets and alleys. I looked for the one I love. I looked, but couldn't find him.

Son 3:3 The sentries patrolling the city saw me. I asked them, "Have you found my lover?"

Son 3:4 As soon as I left them, I found him. I held him and wouldn't let him go until I took him to my mother's house, to the room where I was born.

Son 3:5 Promise me, women of Jerusalem; swear by the swift deer and the gazelles that you will not interrupt our love.

### **Solomon Arrives for the Wedding**

Son 3:6 What is this coming from the desert like a column of smoke, fragrant with incense and myrrh, the incense sold

by the traders?

Son 3:7 Solomon is coming, carried on his throne; sixty soldiers form the bodyguard, the finest soldiers in Israel.

Son 3:8 All of them are skillful with the sword; they are battle-hardened veterans. Each of them is armed with a sword, on guard against a night attack.

Son 3:9 King Solomon is carried on a throne made of the finest wood.

Son 3:10 Its posts are covered with silver; over it is cloth embroidered with gold. Its cushions are covered with purple cloth, lovingly woven by the women of Jerusalem.

Son 3:11 Women of Zion, come and see King Solomon. He is wearing the crown that his mother placed on his head on his wedding day, on the day of his gladness and joy.

## **Song of Solomon 3:1-11**

### **Song of Solomon 3 - A Troubled Night, A Glorious Wedding Procession**

#### **A. The maiden searches for her beloved.**

*1. (1-3) The restless maiden searches for her beloved.*

**By night on my bed I sought the one I love;  
I sought him, but I did not find him.**

**"I will rise now," I said,**

**"And go about the city;**

**In the streets and in the squares**

**I will seek the one I love."**

**I sought him, but I did not find him.**

**The watchmen who go about the city found me;**

**I said,**

**"Have you seen the one I love?"**

- a. **By night on my bed I sought the one I love:** The maiden woke in the middle of the night and instantly felt



alone, longing for her beloved. She **sought him** but could not **find him** anywhere in the house.

i. This snapshot probably records another dream or daydream of the maiden, as in the previous chapter. With this section ending with her addressing her companions, we don't imagine that they haunted or stalked this loving couple with their actual presence at their intimacy.

ii. Since this is likely another dream or daydream of the maiden, it doesn't matter if she recorded it as a married woman or yet-to-be-married maiden. She had the longings of a married woman (that her beloved would share her home and her **bed**) but did not act upon those longings until married.

iii. These lines do record the sexual longing of the maiden, and this is indicated by the particular term used for **bed**: "This is the common word for bed, distinct from the word for 'couch' in 1:16. In Eze 23:17 the connotation is 'love bed', and in Gen 49:4 and Num 31:17 ff is used with overt sexual meaning. This is its only use in the Song." (Carr)

iv. This connotation of the word for **bed** reminds us of Heb 13:4 : *Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*. The Bible consistently condemns sex outside of the marriage commitment (*fornicators and adulterers God will judge*). But the Bible celebrates sexual love within the commitment of marriage, as indicated in The Song of Solomon.

b. **I sought him, but did not find him**: The maiden always longed for her beloved and wanted him close. Yet now, in the middle of the night, she felt the longing more

intensely. She felt alone and longed for his presence, so she imagined herself seeking after him.

i. **Sought:** "Very common in the Old Testament, and is used both literally and figuratively. It is always a conscious act, frequently requiring a great deal of effort (e.g. 1Sa 10:14; Pro 2:4) but with no guarantee of success." (Carr)

ii. "This is very natural and very beautiful. Love creates a perpetual dread lest the loved one should be lost." (Morgan) "Love not only brings a greater experience of joy, but a deeper capacity for pain as well. So as the joy of the kings' presence became greater, so the sorrow from his absence became deeper." (Glickman)

iii. The maiden allowed herself to feel needy without feeling helpless. She felt that she needed her beloved and did not have an artificial sense of self-sufficiency. The maiden did not feel it was a bad thing for her to *need* her beloved.

iv. There is something good in the maiden's seeking of her beloved; yet it came after their relationship was well established. The relationship did not begin nor was it founded upon her pursuit of him.

v. "With what constancy she sought this communion. She began at dead of night, as indeed it is never too late to seek renewed fellowship. Yet she sought on. The streets were lonely, and it was a strange place for a woman to be at such a strange time, but she was too earnest in seeking to be abashed by such circumstances." (Spurgeon)

c. **I will rise... and go about the city... I will seek the one I love:** This emphasizes the urgency and depth of her seeking. She was safe (even under the

supervision of the **watchmen**), but they could not help her find her beloved, even at her request.

i. "She did not sit down, and say to any one of them, "O watchman of the night, thy company cheers me! The streets are lonely and dangerous; but if thou art near, I feel perfectly safe, and I will be content to stay awhile with thee." Nay, but she leaves the watchmen, and still goes along the streets until she finds *him* whom her soul loveth." (Spurgeon)

ii. "It is probable that, lighting upon these watchmen, she promised herself much counsel and comfort from them, but was disappointed. It pleaseth God many times to cross our likeliest projects, that himself alone may be leaned upon." (Trapp)

## *2. (4) Finding her beloved.*

**Scarcely had I passed by them,  
When I found the one I love.  
I held him and would not let him go,  
Until I had brought him to the house of my mother,  
And into the chamber of her who conceived me.**

a. **I found the one I love:** She dreamt that her diligent search was rewarded. Though the watchmen mentioned in the previous verse could not help her, she nevertheless **found the one** she loved.

i. It is repeated four times in these first four verses: **the one I love**. This is how she thought of her special man.

b. **I held him and would not let him go:** It is easy to picture the relieved maiden clinging to her beloved, feeling calmed and secure in his embrace.

i. **Would not let him go:** It seems to have been the same kind of embrace that Mary Magdalene had upon

Jesus when she first saw her resurrected Lord (Joh 20:16-17).

ii. In either interpreting or applying Son 3:1-4 to the relationship between Jesus and His people, many commentators have noted that this is an example of how the believer, under some sense of separation from Jesus, must seek after Him.

iii. "When, either in a dream, or in reality we lose our sense of His presence, let us search for Him; and then in the finding, with new devotion, let us hold Him, and refuse to let Him go." (Morgan)

c. **Until I had brought him to the house of my mother:** The maiden dreamed of bringing her beloved home with her, to always be together with him – and to enjoy the intimacy of **the chamber** of her mother's home.

i. "Still clinging to him, she leads him gently but forcefully to her mother's house and into the maternal bedroom." (Carr)

ii. The fact that it is in **the house of her mother** shows that she expected it to be when they were in fact married, and not as a pre-marital sexual rendezvous. "That there I might entertain and embrace him, and gain my mother's consent, and so proceed to the consummation of the marriage." (Poole)

iii. "She is not looking for an illicit consummation of their love. Consummation she wants, but even in her dream she wants the consummation to be right. Where in human literature does one find a text so erotic and yet so moral as this?" (Kinlaw)

iv. "This passage may also reflect ancient Israelite marital customs now unknown to us. Perhaps we

should notice that Isaac brought Rebekah into the tent of his mother, even though Sarah was deceased, and there consummated their marriage (Gen 24:67).” (Kinlaw)

v. Applying this symbolically, Charles Spurgeon noted the steps of the maiden’s progress towards her beloved:

- She *loved him*.
- She *sought him*.
- She *found him not*.
- She *found him*.
- She *held him*.
- She *brought him*.

vi. Spurgeon also made great application of the fact that the maiden **held him and would not let him go**. “Mark, that according to the text, it is very apparent that Jesus will go away if he is not held. ‘I held him and I would not let him go;’ as if he would have gone if he had not been firmly retained. When he met with Jacob that night at the Jabbok, he said, ‘Let me go.’ He would not go without Jacob’s letting him, but he would have gone if Jacob had loosed his hold. The patriarch replied, ‘I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.’ This is one of Christ’s ways and manners; it is one of the peculiarities of his character. When he walked to Emmaus with the two disciples, ‘he made as if he would have gone further:’ they might have known it was none other than the Angel of the Covenant by that very habit. He would have gone further, but they constrained him, saying, ‘Abide with us for the day is far spent.’ If you are willing to lose Christ’s company he is never intrusive, he will go away from you, and leave you till you know his value

and begin to pine for him. 'I will go,' says he, 'and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.' He will go unless you hold him." (Spurgeon)

- Jesus *must* be held; He will go unless you hold Him.
- Jesus is *willing* to be held; He is not trying to escape us.
- Jesus *can* be held; He we can grasp Him by faith.
- Jesus *Himself* must be held; not merely a creed, tradition, or a ceremony.

3. (5) *An exhortation to the maiden's companions.*

**I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the does of the field,  
Do not stir up nor awaken love  
Until it pleases.**

a. **I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem:** This exhortation to the **daughters of Jerusalem** is another reminder that this section is to be understood as a dream or daydream of the maiden. We are not to imagine the couple together in the intimacy described in the previous lines with the **daughters of Jerusalem** observing.

b. **By the gazelles or by the does of the field:** This poetic phrasing (first found in Son 2:7) surely sounded more natural and meaningful to the first readers of the Song of Solomon than it does to us

c. **Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases:** As in its previous usage, this idea can be understood as a plea to leave her sweet romantic dream uninterrupted. Or, it can be understood both in the context of *relationship* and in *passion*.

i. In terms of relationship it means, "Let our love progress and grow until it is matured and fruitful, making a genuinely pleasing relationship – *don't let us go too fast.*" In terms of passion it means, "Let our love making continue without interruption until we are both fulfilled. Don't let us start until we can go all the way."

## **B. The spectacular arrival of the wedding party.**

1. (6-8) *Solomon's entourage brings the maiden to the wedding.*

**Who is this coming out of the wilderness  
Like pillars of smoke,  
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all the merchant's fragrant powders?  
Behold, it is Solomon's couch,  
With sixty valiant men around it,  
Of the valiant of Israel.  
They all hold swords,  
Being expert in war.  
Every man has his sword on his thigh  
Because of fear in the night.**

a. **Who is this coming out of the wilderness:** The immediate impression upon reading this is to think that this is the beloved (Solomon) making a dramatic appearance. Yet the ancient Hebrew word translated **this** is in the feminine singular; the question "**Who is this?**" is properly answered, "It is the maiden arriving in Solomon's *palanquin*, for the wedding described at the end of the chapter."

i. Kinlaw explains that the word translated "**this**" is in the feminine singular, and believes it refers to the maiden herself. "It is obviously a wedding procession... our picture is of the groom and his men

bringing his bride from her home to his city for the wedding." (Kinlaw)

ii. The other times this question is asked (Who is this?) in Song of Solomon, the answer is the "the maiden" (see Son 6:10; Son 8:5). "In either case it cannot be Solomon (or the 'king') who is described." (Carr)

iii. Notably, she came **out of the wilderness**, "From whence we little expected to see so beautiful and glorious bride to come, such persons being usually bred in courts or noble cities." (Poole)

iv. "And, doubtless, whenever God shall be pleased to bring forth his Church in power, and to make her mighty among the sons of men, the ignorance of men will be discovered breaking forth in yonder, for they will say, 'Who is this?'" (Spurgeon)

**b. Like pillars of smoke, perfumed:** This adds to the idea of the dignity and impressive character of Solomon's entourage, which was then given to the maiden to bring her to her wedding. She seems to rejoice in this, and happily describes the group as they arrive, complete with **the valiant of Israel**.

i. The apocryphal, inter-testament book 1 Maccabees described a similar wedding party: "Where they lifted up their eyes, and looked, and, behold, there was much ado and great carriage: and the bridegroom came forth, and his friends and brethren, to meet them with drums, and instruments of music, and many weapons." (1Ma 9:39).

ii. This whole procession was *very* impressive. It even was filled with sacred and sacrificial significance, indicated by the description "**perfumed with myrrh and frankincense**." "Although this form occurs only



here, the word occurs elsewhere about 115 times with the meaning 'go up in smoke' or 'make (a sacrifice) go up in smoke'." (Carr) The idea is that the smell of **myrrh and frankincense** comes from their burning in a sacrificial sense, as an offering of incense.

iii. **Solomon's couch** uses a different word than in Son 3:1, and does not have a sexual connotation.

iv. "There is no reason though why [**this**] should not be read as it normally is and refer to the maiden. If so, we have the scene where the groom has sent for his bride, and she comes properly perfumed in a magnificently appropriate carriage and with an impressive array of protecting attendants." (Kinlaw)

c. **Sixty valiant men around it**: We might say that Solomon's wedding party had **sixty** groomsmen. They weren't there to keep Solomon from backing out of the wedding; they were there to show that he was a powerful man who could genuinely *protect* his maiden.

i. "Of course when travelling through a wilderness, a royal procession was always in danger of attack. Arabs prowled around; wandering Bedouins were always prepared to fall upon the caravan; and more especially was this the case with a marriage procession, because then the robbers might expect to obtain many jewels, or, if not, a heavy ransom for the redemption of the bride or bridegroom by their friends." (Spurgeon)

ii. Therefore the maiden had no need to worry in the **fear of the night**; because she was becoming one with her beloved, what belonged to him now also belonged to her. This expresses the oneness of life and the shared life that should exist between husband and wife. "She and Solomon were so identified with

each other at this state that there was a perfect oneness between them. What was his, was hers. What he enjoyed, she enjoyed. This is union.” (Nee)

iii. “The very air is perfumed by the smoke of the incense that ascends pillar-like to the clouds; and all that safeguards the position of the Bridegroom Himself, and shows forth His dignity, safeguards also the accompanying bride, the sharer of His glory.” (Taylor)

iv. Spurgeon used this text to show that this answers the fears people have about God’s church on this earth. “All good men are dead; there are none left to guard the church as before.” Yet by symbolic application, the text shows us:

- There are *enough* guards for the church.
- There are *valiant* guards for the church.
- There are guards in the *right places*, all about the church.
- The good guards of the church are *well-armed*, well-trained, always ready, and watchful.

## 2. (9-11) Solomon enthroned and crowned.

**Of the wood of Lebanon**

**Solomon the King**

**Made himself a palanquin:**

**He made its pillars *of* silver,**

**Its support *of* gold,**

**Its seat *of* purple,**

**Its interior paved *with* love**

**By the daughters of Jerusalem.**

**Go forth, O daughters of Zion,**

**And see King Solomon with the crown**

**With which his mother crowned him**

**On the day of his wedding,  
The day of the gladness of his heart.**

a. **Solomon the King made himself a palanquin:** The maiden saw (or imagined herself seeing) herself arriving for her wedding, coming upon the great entourage prepared for Solomon, carried by four or six strong men on a **palanquin**, sort of a portable, ornate couch for carrying an important person.

b. **Pillars of silver... support of gold... seat of purple:** The maiden was impressed not only with the opulence of this **palanquin**, but especially that *he shared all these* symbols of authority and prestige with her. Solomon shared *his best* with his maiden, and Solomon's best was pretty good.

i. It was clear from this that the beloved (Solomon) could do the two essential things a man must be able to do before he is ready to be married: he must be able to *protect* and *provide* for his maiden. The *protection* was shown in the armed men who surrounded this procession; the *provision* was shown in the opulence of Solomon's entourage. Of course, he cannot protect or provide for his maiden (or bride) until he can protect and provide for *himself*; then they live a shared life, a oneness, with whatever belongs to him now also belongs to her also.

ii. This is why a boy must grow up and become a man before he can be a good husband, and why the process of preparing to become a husband and being a husband is good for maturing men. "Love and marriage frequently bring out the noblest qualities in a person. A carefree and somewhat careless young man may become very responsible and diligent. A childish boy may become steady and manly. Why? Because love is the mother of virtue and the father of

maturity... The one you love should bring forth your best qualities and make you a better person.” (Glickman)

iii. It also shows that the maiden respected and honored her beloved and saw his strength and authority as a good thing, not a threatening thing – because now it was also, in a sense, *her* strength and authority, because she would be one with him.

c. **See King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him:** When Solomon was anointed and recognized as king – even before the death of his father David – the high priest presided over the ceremony, not his mother Bathsheba (1Ki 1:38-40). This may mean that the when **his mother crowned him** was when his mother crowned him for his wedding day, in a time of relative innocence when Solomon was captivated by and attached to only one woman.

i. “Not the royal crown used in the coronation/consecration ceremony, but a ‘diadem’ or ‘wreath’ made either of branches (like the laurel wreath of the Olympic games), or of precious metals and stones (Psa 21:3), that is a symbol of honour and joy (*gladness*).” (Carr) This connects well with the rabbinic traditions that a bride and bridegroom were considered to be a “royal couple” on the day of their wedding.

ii. Considering that Solomon had his heart drawn away to *many* women and that these women drew his heart away from God, it is hard to see how this amazing collection of love poems could have come from such a corrupt man. This passage hints at one possible explanation. “Could it be that this is an indication that, if the Song did come from Solomon, it

originated before his crowning in his most innocent period?" (Kinlaw)

iii. Yet the mention of **his mother** reminds us of Bathsheba, and the period when she helped Solomon take the throne of Israel (1Ki 1:11-18; 1Ki 1:28-31). The connection to 1 Kings 1 brings up the relation between the maiden of the Song of Solomon (called the *Shulamite* in Son 6:13) and *Abishag the Shunammite* mentioned in 1Ki 1:3-4; 1Ki 1:15. From ancient times, many have wanted to associate the beautiful Abishag with the *Shulamite*. "According to the theory, as she ministered to David, she became romantically involved with his son Solomon and was later the subject of his love poem." (Dilday in commentary on 1 Kings)

iv. Yet we must say that this conjecture at best - and *Shumen* is not the same as *Shulam*. "*Shunem*, the modern Solem, lay eleven kilometers south-east of Nazareth and five kilometers north of Jezreel in Issachar territory, and was visited by Elijah (2Ki 4:8). There is no need to identify Abishag with the Shulammite of Son 6:13." (Wiseman in commentary on 1 Kings)

d. **On the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart:** It was a glad wedding because their love was real, it was passionate, but it was also pure and restrained into the proper channels. This principle made it a glad day not only for the maiden and the beloved, but also for everyone.

i. "It was not only the day of gladness for the king but also for those who shared in his happiness... Their love had become a fountain from which all could taste the sweetness of their joy." (Glickman)

## **Solomon Admires His Bride's Beauty**

**Son 4:1** How beautiful you are, my love! How your eyes shine with love behind your veil. Your hair dances like a flock of goats bounding down the hills of Gilead.

Son 4:2 Your teeth are as white as sheep that have just been shorn and washed. Not one of them is missing; they are all perfectly matched.

Son 4:3 Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; how lovely they are when you speak. Your cheeks glow behind your veil.

Son 4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, round and smooth, with a necklace like a thousand shields hung around it.

Son 4:5 Your breasts are like gazelles, twin deer feeding among lilies.

Son 4:6 I will stay on the hill of myrrh, the hill of incense, until the morning breezes blow and the darkness disappears.

Son 4:7 How beautiful you are, my love; how perfect you are!

Son 4:8 Come with me from the Lebanon Mountains, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Come down from the top of Mount Amana, from Mount Senir and Mount Hermon, where the lions and leopards live.

Son 4:9 The look in your eyes, my sweetheart and bride, and the necklace you are wearing have stolen my heart.

Son 4:10 Your love delights me, my sweetheart and bride. Your love is better than wine; your perfume more fragrant than any spice.

Son 4:11 The taste of honey is on your lips, my darling; your tongue is milk and honey for me. Your clothing has all the fragrance of Lebanon.

Son 4:12 My sweetheart, my bride, is a secret garden, a walled garden, a private spring;

Son 4:13 there the plants flourish. They grow like an orchard of pomegranate trees and bear the finest fruits.

There is no lack of henna and nard,

Son 4:14 of saffron, calamus, and cinnamon, or incense of every kind. Myrrh and aloes grow there with all the most fragrant perfumes.

Son 4:15 Fountains water the garden, streams of flowing water, brooks gushing down from the Lebanon Mountains.

### **Together in the Garden of Love**

Son 4:16 Wake up, North Wind. South Wind, blow on my garden; fill the air with fragrance. Let my lover come to his garden and eat the best of its fruits.

## **Song of Solomon 4:1-16**

### **Song of Solomon 4 - The Beauty of Consummated Love**

#### **A. The beloved praises the appearance and character of the maiden.**

*1. (1-5) The beloved praises the appearance of the maiden.*

**Behold, you *are* fair, my love!**

**Behold, you *are* fair!**

**You *have* dove's eyes behind your veil.**

**Your hair *is* like a flock of goats,**

**Going down from Mount Gilead.**

**Your teeth *are* like a flock of shorn *sheep***

**Which have come up from the washing,**

**Every one of which bears twins,**

**And none *is* barren among them.**

**Your lips *are* like a strand of scarlet,**

**And your mouth is lovely.**

**Your temples behind your veil**

***Are* like a piece of pomegranate.**

**Your neck *is* like the tower of David,**

**Built for an armory,**

**On which hang a thousand bucklers,**

**All shields of mighty men.  
Your two breasts *are* like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle,  
Which feed among the lilies.**

a. **Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold you are fair:** We may fairly connect this snapshot with the one preceding it, which ended with the wedding procession and ceremony between the maiden and the beloved (Solomon). This section describes the first intimacy of the maiden and the beloved after the wedding and is given to us almost completely in the words of the beloved, who was preparing his maiden for their first experience of marital intimacy.

i. "It was now the night their courtship would end and their marriage begin. The wedding guests had gone. The evening had come... it was an eloquent silence, the silence of anticipation of love fulfilled." (Glickman). Now, the beloved groom was the first to speak and when he spoke he praised the beauty of his bride.

ii. As he spoke, it was evident that the beloved was skilled at showing affection to his maiden. The Apostle Paul would later write, *Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her* (1Co 7:3). It is wrong for a husband to withhold affection from his wife; and since Paul meant this to apply to every Christian marriage, it shows that *every* wife has affection *due her*. Paul didn't think only the young or pretty or submissive wives were *due* affection; every wife is *due* affection because she is a wife of a Christian man. Jesus is affectionate to His own Bride after the same pattern.

b. **Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold you are fair:** The beloved began not with aggressive or selfish actions, but with tender and confidence building words to his maiden. She had previously doubted her beauty



(Son 1:5-6); yet he truthfully assured her (doubly so) that she was the most beautiful woman in the world to him.

i. "How sensitive it was of the king to eloquently praise his bride on their wedding night. Even the loveliest girl might feel insecure on this occasion. Yet as always he was sensitive to her and careful to make her secure in his love." (Glickman)

ii. Charles Spurgeon took this as an analogy of how Jesus speaks to and praises His people: "But to hear Christ turn round upon his Church, and seem to say to her 'Thou hast praised me, I will praise thee; thou thinkest much of me, I think quite as much of thee; thou usest great expressions to me, I will use just the same to thee. Thou sayest my love is better than wine, so is thine to me; thou tellest me all my garments smell of myrrh, so do thine; thou sayest my word is sweeter than honey to thy lips, so is thine to mine. All that thou canst say of me, I say it teach to thee; I see myself in thy eyes, I can see my own beauty in thee; and whatever belongs to me, belongs to thee. Therefore, O my love, I will sing back the song: thou hast sung it to thy beloved, and I will sing it to my beloved.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **You have dove's eyes behind your veil:** The beloved not only gave a *general* statement of the maiden's beauty (**Behold, you are fair!**); he also told her specifically how she was beautiful to him. He did this with poetic language more familiar to her ears than to ours, but clearly wanted her to know how beautiful her **eyes** were to him.

i. John Trapp wrote of the characteristics of **dove's eyes**: "Fair, full, clear, chaste." Yet as he took the Song of Solomon to be primarily an allegory, he

thought that these beautiful **eyes** belonged to the church, the bride of Christ: "But by 'eyes' here we are chiefly to understand pastors and ministers, those 'seers,' as they were called of old." This is another example of the weakness and danger of an overly-allegorical approach to the Song of Solomon.

ii. This is the first of seven physical features that the beloved described and praised in his maiden (**eyes, hair, teeth, lips, temples** and cheeks, **neck**, and **breasts**). "In their culture seven was the number of perfection. So even in the number of compliments he gives, the king tells his bride how perfect she is for him." (Glickman)

iii. It also evident that the beloved used his powers of *observation* and *description*; he was focused upon her and not upon himself. Taken with her beauty at the wedding ceremony, he continued the focus into the beauty. He wisely touched her with his words before he touched her with his hands, assuring her that she was captivating and interesting enough to both carefully observe and describe. The maiden could safely yield to a man who cared for her this much, and this unselfishly.

iv. **Behind your veil:** The **veil** was not regular dress for a Jewish woman in Old Testament times. "Normally girls and women wore head-dresses but not veils, except for special occasions. Engagements (Gen 24:65) and the actual wedding celebration (Gen 29:23-25) were two of these occasions." (Carr)

d. **Your hair is like a flock of goats:** The idea is not that her hair is like the hair of a goat; rather, it is that her hair beautifully flows down her head like a black-haired **flock of goats, going down from Mount**

**Gilead.** Her hair was long and flowing and seemed to bounce with life.

- i. "Most Palestinian goats have long wavy black hair. The movement of a large flock on distant hill makes it appear as if the whole hillside is alive." (Carr)

e. **Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep:** The idea isn't that her teeth are wooly; they are like a **flock of shorn sheep** that all look the same, are clean (**come up from the washing**), match one another (**every one of which bears twins**), and are complete (**none is barren among them**).

- i. Matthew Poole understood this primarily as an allegory and related it to a description of the church: "By the *teeth* some understand the teachers, which may be compared to teeth, because they prepare, and as it were chew, spiritual food for the people."

f. **Your lips are like a strand of scarlet:** The idea is that her lips are thinner rather than fuller (thought to be more attractive in that day), that they are well outlined, and a beautiful deep red color.

- i. "The delicate outline of a girl's features frequently determines her beauty, especially with respect to her lips. It is this delicate form he praises. With a scarlet thread an artist could perfectly shape a woman's lips." (Glickman)

g. **Your temples behind your veil are like a piece of pomegranate:** The word translated "**temples**" here also includes the cheeks. He saw her **temples** and cheeks as full of color, flushed with both excitement and beauty.

- i. "The term means more broadly 'the side of the face' *i.e.* cheeks." (Carr)
- ii. **A piece of pomegranate** has the idea of the outside of the fruit, not the inside. "The interior of the

pomegranate with its juicy red flesh, hard white seeds and yellowish membranes... sounds like a description of an advanced case of acne.” (Carr)

h. **Your neck is like the tower of David:** The idea is not that her neck was as long as a tower or proportioned like one. Rather, it speaks of the noble and strong character displayed by her **neck**, both literally and symbolically. In the ancient world, the neck was one part of the body thought to reflect *character*. A bent-over neck was a picture of humiliation. A stiff neck was a sign of stubbornness.

i. “The tower of David was a military fortress of the nation. The country depended upon the faithfulness and integrity of that fortress. And it must have been very reassuring to loop upon that awesome stronghold, displaying as it did all the shields of war. The people had a healthy respect for it. Therefore, when the king likens the neck of his bride to the fortress, he is paying her a great compliment. The way she carries herself reflects an integrity and character that breeds a healthy respect from all who see her.” (Glickman)

i. **Your two breasts are like two fawns... which feed among the lilies:** The idea is that the maiden’s breasts look as innocent and attractive as young deer (**fawns**); or also perhaps that her breasts are as beautiful as white fields of lilies marked by the color of **two fawns**.

i. “A baby deer is soft and gentle, and everyone seeing these little deer long to pet them and play with them. Thus, when the king compares her breasts to two fawns, he is really saying that he longs to caress her soft and tender breasts.” (Glickman)

ii. “It may be the *nipples* especially, which the poet compares to the *two young roes*; and the *lilies* may

refer to the *whiteness* of the *breasts* themselves.” (Clarke) “The *lilies* being white and swelling, and the *roes* of a reddish colour, and their bodies being hid from sight by the lilies, their heads only appearing above them, bear some resemblance to the red nipples appearing in the top of the lily white breasts... They are compared to *roes* for their loveliness, of which see Pro 5:19; to *young* ones for their smallness, which in breasts is a beauty; to *twins* for their exact likeness.” (Poole)

iii. Many commentators follow Trapp’s hesitancy to think this refers to the actual **breasts** of an actual woman: “The Church’s breasts here are said to be fair, full, and equally matched. Hereby some understand the two testaments... These breasts are also suitable and equal, as twins.”

iv. “The lover’s metaphors permit a chasteness and a modesty that less poetic speech would preclude.” (Kinlaw)

2. (6) *The beloved longs to consummate his love for the maiden.*

**Until the day breaks  
And the shadows flee away,  
I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh  
And to the hill of frankincense.**

a. **Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away:**

The beloved welcomed the coming of the night, after the celebration of the wedding mentioned in the previous snapshot. Their wedding night was the appropriate setting for the consummation of their deep love.

i. “He will fulfill her request and hence declare that until the light of dawn breaks they will give their love to one another.” (Glickman)

b. **I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense:** Some focus on the **mountain** and **hill** imagery in this verse and believe the beloved longed for the embrace of the maiden's breast. This is possible but doesn't explain well the references to **myrrh** and **frankincense**. It is perhaps better to see this as a poetic reference to their seclusion, surrounded by the luxury and sensual pleasure of rich scents.

3. (7-8) *The beloved praises the character of the maiden and tells of his desire to be with her.*

**You are all fair, my love,  
And there is no spot in you.  
Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse,  
With me from Lebanon.  
Look from the top of Amana,  
From the top of Senir and Hermon,  
From the lions' dens,  
From the mountains of the leopards.**

a. **You are all fair, my love and there is no spot in you:** After giving a seven-fold description of his maiden's beauty, the beloved summarizes his observations. She was more than **fair**; she was **all fair**, and there was **no spot in** her.

i. **No spot in you:** "The word is used only eighteen times in the Old Testament... generally in describing the perfect sacrificial animals which were required."  
(Carr)

b. **Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse:** Since the maiden came from the north, the beloved poetically invited her to leave the northern region, to leave her family and her fears (alluded to with **lion's dens** and **leopards**) – and to "**come with me.**"

i. Before he asked her to pledge the sharing of her virginity, he pledged the sharing of his *life*. "The 'come with me' of our translation is in Hebrew *itti* ('with me') twice repeated, a prepositional phrase used as an invitation! He wants her with him. 'With me' sums up his desire." (Kinlaw)

ii. This is the first time he calls the maiden his **spouse**, his bride – and then he uses the word repeatedly. According to Kinlaw, it could very well be that the Hebrew word for **spouse** (*bride*) comes from the root *to complete*.

iii. **Spouse**: "The focus of the word is on the married status of the woman, particularly on the sexual element presupposed in that status as 'the completed one.'" (Carr)

iv. **From the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards**: "In asking her to come from such fearful places, he is really asking her to bring her thoughts completely to him and leave her fears behind and perhaps to leave the lingering thoughts of home behind as well... he wished her to leave her fear and anxiety about the new life of marriage and simply come to him... So he calls her from her fears to his arms." (Glickman)

4. (9-11) *The beloved expresses the depth of his passion for the maiden.*

**You have ravished my heart,  
My sister, my spouse;  
You have ravished my heart  
With one *look* of your eyes,  
With one link of your necklace.  
How fair is your love,  
My sister, my spouse!  
How much better than wine is your love,**

**And the scent of your perfumes  
Than all spices!  
Your lips, O *my* spouse,  
Drip as the honeycomb;  
Honey and milk *are* under your tongue;  
And the fragrance of your garments  
Is like the fragrance of Lebanon.**

a. **You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse:** Here the beloved went beyond praising the maiden's beauty and even character; he described the *effect* that she had upon him. **With one look of your eyes**, he was a changed man and deeply in love with her.

i. **You have ravished my heart:** "'Thou hast hearted me,' i.e., taken away my heart." (Clarke)

ii. **Sister:** "At last she would become his wife... that is the reason he calls her his sister. In their culture 'sister' was an affectionate term for one's wife." (Glickman)

iii. "*My sister*; so he calls her, partly because both he and she had one and the same father, to wit, God... and partly to show the greatness of his love to her, which is such as cannot be sufficiently expressed by any one relation, but must borrow the perfections and affections of all to describe it." (Poole)

iv. "As if he could not express his near and dear relationship to her by any one term, he employs the two. 'My sister' – that is, one by birth, partaker of the same nature. 'My spouse' – that is, one in love, joined by sacred ties of affection that never can be snapped. 'My sister' by birth, 'My spouse' by choice. 'My sister' in communion, 'My spouse' in absolute union with myself." (Spurgeon)



**b. How fair is your love... How much better than wine is your love:** The beloved's praise of the maiden's love reminds us that she was not a passive recipient of his love. He initiated the relationship and pursued her; but she responded with beautiful and precious love all her own.

i. **How much better than wine is your love:** "This same she had said of him in Son 1:2. Now he returns it upon her, as is usual among lovers." (Trapp) Spurgeon applied this principle to the relationship between Jesus and His people: "Now can you believe it? Just what you think of Christ's love, Christ thinks of yours. You value his love, and you are right in so doing; but I am afraid that still you undervalue it. He even values your love, if I may so speak, he sets a far higher estimate upon it than you do; he thinks very much of little, he estimates it not by its strength, but by its sincerity." (Spurgeon)

ii. This compliment showed she wasn't passive in their lovemaking. "He found her not lovely only, but loving; he had made her so, and now takes singular delight and complacency in his own work." (Trapp)

iii. **And the scent of your perfumes than all spices!** "The sense of the colon is not that her *perfumes* are better than any others, but that to her lover even her everyday anointing oils smell better than the most exotic perfumes." (Carr)

**c. Your lips, O my spouse... honey and milk are under your tongue:** The beloved described the sweetness of the kisses of the maiden.

i. "Way back then the king tells his bride that honey and milk are under her tongue. But this expression may tell us more than that French kissing was around long before the French." (Glickman)

d. **The fragrance of your garments:** The whole scene is intimate and filled with beautiful sights, smells, tastes, and words. We are poetically and tastefully brought to the point of the consummation of their intimacy.

i. "*Garments* is not the common word for clothing... The *salma* is the outer garment which served both as a cloak for the day and a cover while sleeping. This latter usage gave rise to the use of the word for a bed-covering... In the context here, some sort of sleep-wear (negligee?) may be implied." (Carr)

**B. The consummation of the love between the maiden and the beloved.**

1. (12-15) *The beloved praises the virginity of the maiden.*

**A garden enclosed**

***Is my sister, my spouse,***

**A spring shut up,**

**A fountain sealed.**

**Your plants *are* an orchard of pomegranates**

**With pleasant fruits,**

**Fragrant henna with spikenard,**

**Spikenard and saffron,**

**Calamus and cinnamon,**

**With all trees of frankincense,**

**Myrrh and aloes,**

**With all the chief spices—**

**A fountain of gardens,**

**A well of living waters,**

**And streams from Lebanon.**

a. **A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed:** With these three images the beloved praised the virginity of his maiden and did so immediately before receiving the gift of her virginity. Her sexuality had not been given to another; it

was like an **enclosed garden**, a protected **spring**, a **fountain sealed**.

i. **A garden**: "A garden is neither common ground nor ground for the planting of things at random, nor is it ground for mere agricultural purposes, but for the production of something for beauty and pleasure." (Nee)

- The idea of this garden suggests *privacy*; the maiden's sexuality was to be privately expressed.
- The idea of this garden suggests *separation*; the maiden's sexuality was to be focused on and set apart to her beloved. "A garden indeed, but she was not a public garden." (Nee)
- The idea of this garden suggests *sacredness*; the maiden's sexuality was something holy, and both she and the beloved were to regard it as such.
- The idea of this garden suggests *security*; the maiden's sexuality was to be respected and not violated, even by the beloved – it was only to be expressed in the context of security.

ii. **A spring shut up, a fountain sealed**: The idea is not that this metaphorical **spring** or **fountain** is dried up and useless; rather that it is protected so that its water can only go to its rightful owner. "To 'seal' a spring was to enclose it and protect the water for its rightful owner; Hezekiah did this when he had the tunnel dug from the Virgin's Spring at Gihon to the Pool of Siloam to safeguard Jerusalem's water supply [2Ki 20:20]." (Carr)

iii. The beloved therefore recognized the *great value* of the maiden's virginity, as she also recognized. Individuals and societies suffer greatly when virginity is no longer valued. It is important for parents, young

men, young women, and the church as a whole to value virginity and never treat it as something to be embarrassed of. In addition, the concept of a restored or a "from-now-on" virginity should be promoted and valued.

iv. Seeing the high value of virginity also helps us to understand the Biblical commands against pre-marital sex. It is helpful to refute many myths about pre-marital sex:

- *Myth: "The Bible says nothing against premarital sex."* Fact: The high value placed on virginity, seen here and in other passages such as Deu 22:13-29 shows premarital sex is wrong. But it also clearly found in the passages that speak against the sexual sin known in the New Testament as *porneia*, and commonly translated "fornication" (

1Co 6:13; 1Co 6:18; Eph 5:3; Eph 5:5; 1Th 4:3. *Porneia* broadly refers to all types of sexual activity outside of marriage (including homosexuality); it encompasses practically all sexual behavior outside of that which is practiced between a husband and a wife in the bonds of their marriage.

- *Myth: "He wants to have sex with me because he loves me."* Fact: His love for you will be proved by his willingness to wait for marriage. The desire for sex does not prove love in a man. In one survey, 55% of men said "yes" to the following question: "If you could be certain that your wife or girlfriend would never know, would you have sex with any of her friends?" And to the question, "Have you ever had sex with a woman you have actively disliked?" 58% of men said "yes". *You are foolish if you think a boy loves you - or even likes you - because he wants to have sex with you.*

- *Myth: "My boyfriend is a Christian and loves the Lord. I don't have to worry about that."* Fact: Christian men face the same challenges as non-Christians when it comes to sexual desires and lusts. They have the *ability* to overcome those lusts by the

power of the Holy Spirit, but it isn't easy and many who thought they were strong enough have fallen to these sins.

- *Myth: "We are going to get married, so it doesn't matter."* Fact: It does matter. First, you are setting a value on your own sexuality; there is a sense in which a woman then gives her future husband the right to treat her as an object. Second, you are setting a pattern; you are agreeing that in some circumstances, sex outside of marriage is acceptable, and this is something you don't want in your mind or in the mind of your marriage partner; especially because one of the most important aspects of a long lasting, fulfilling sexual relationship is *trust*. Third, you are only taking *away* from the blessing God intends for your sexual relationship when married.

- *Myth: "We can be married before God."* Fact: If you were on a desert island without any intuitions of government or society, this might be an argument. But marriage in both the Biblical and cultural sense is being joined together in a public ceremony that is recognized as legal and legitimate by the law and the culture. You aren't on a desert island.

b. **Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard:** Since he introduced the metaphor of a **garden**, the beloved poetically described the value and beauty of the maiden's sexuality.

- i. Some take the metaphor of the **garden** to be a rather direct reference to the female genitalia. Given the continued metaphorical description of these verses, it is better to see the **garden** more as a reference to the maiden's sexuality in general. Of

course, this idea is connected to her anatomy, but its concept is less direct.

**c. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters:**

The images reinforce the idea of richness and abundance. The beloved understood that the maiden's virginity was not previously spent because it was considered small and insignificant; rather it was protected because it was great and important. Now that her virginity would be properly yielded, its abundant and life-giving character would be seen and experienced.

i. As stated before, the expression of the maiden's sexuality was to be private, separate, sacred, and secure. Yet the goodness and benefit of such a godly expression of sexuality would benefit her whole person, and that benefit would be *public*, like **a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters**.

ii. "Her garden is a paradise of delightful fruits, fragrant flowers, colorful blossoms, towering trees and aromatic spices. She is overwhelmingly beautiful, as refreshing and uplifting as spring flowers and enchanting spices. She was the embodiment of the rich life of spring itself." (Glickman)

iii. In seeing the goodness and honor and blessing of virginity – of a woman's sexuality being protected and not trampled upon until it is ready to be properly yielded in marriage – it is almost impossible for those women who have not properly guarded their virginity (or worse yet had it stolen from them) to feel that they can never enjoy this blessing or anything like it. It is true that once entered, this garden can no longer be un-entered. But to extend the garden metaphor, a garden that has been trodden upon and is in disarray can be restored again to health and beauty through wisdom, self-control, effort, and most importantly

through the work of the Master Gardener (the one who created the woman's sexuality). It cannot be un-entered if it already has been, but it can be restored to goodness.

iv. These principles apply equally unto men, who may of course also unwisely forfeit their virginity. Like the woman taken in adultery and brought before Jesus, one can hear the words from their Savior, "Neither do I condemn You" and "Go and sin no more."

2. (16) *The maiden yields her virginity to her beloved.*

**Awake, O north wind,  
And come, O south!  
Blow upon my garden,  
That its spices may flow out.  
Let my beloved come to his garden  
And eat its pleasant fruits.**

a. **Awake, O north wind, and come O south! Blow upon my garden:** Here, for the first and only time in this section, the maiden speaks. First, she took the **garden** imagery introduced by her beloved, and thought of gentle winds releasing and carrying the fragrance of a literal garden. In this she asked both her beloved (and perhaps also her God) to release the beautiful fragrance of her preserved, protected sexuality – now ready to be yielded to her beloved.

i. "As the breezes of spring are the fragrant messengers of a garden sent to lure the outside world within, so now she requests those breezes to blow upon her garden and bring her lover to her... With poetic beauty and propriety she asks her lover to possess her." (Glickman)

b. **Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits:** *This* is the moment of yielded virginity,



where the beloved is invited to enjoy the previously protected and sealed sexuality of the maiden. A line before, the maiden called it "**my garden**"; now it was **his garden**. Her virginity, her sexuality, was protected so that it could be fully given to her **beloved**.

i. "And she calls the garden both *hers* and *his*, because of the oneness which is between them... whereby they have a common interest one in another's person and concerns." (Poole)

ii. The *description* is poetic and shy; the *experience* was deep and moving.

iii. He and he alone has the right to **eat** the **pleasant fruits** of her garden; only he can enjoy the pleasure and blessing of the maiden's sexuality.

iv. Some who take the **garden** metaphor as a direct reference to female genitalia believe this describes a specific sex act that the beloved performed upon the woman, involving the lips of the beloved and the metaphorical **garden** of the maiden. This is an unnecessary over-interpretation of this passage, though such acts are entirely permissible for non-coerced, fully consenting married couples under the principle of the honorable and undefiled marriage bed of Heb 13:4.

v. Taking these lines as allegorical and applying them to the life of the believer with their Savior, G. Campbell Morgan wrote: "The one overwhelming passion of the loved of the Lord, is to give His heart satisfaction, to provide from Him the precious fruits for which He in love is seeking. That we may do that, we call for the north wind and for the south; for adversity and prosperity; for winter and summer; in order that by their varied ministries, we may become to Him a garden of delights."

3. (5:1a) *The beloved receives the offered virginity of the maiden.*

**I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse;  
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;  
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;  
I have drunk my wine with my milk.**

a. **I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse:** The beloved accepted the invitation of his maiden and had received her virginity as a precious gift. The long anticipated, passionate desires were now rightly and beautifully consummated.

i. "Here, for the first time in the Song, the 'garden' is opened and entrance is invited and fulfilled." (Carr)

ii. "The language used here of love's consummation is classic in its chasteness, a character possible only through the use of symbolic language.... Metaphor plays the same role here as the veil in the temple. Sinful man needs such to protect the mystery." (Kinlaw)

b. **My garden:** In the previous verse the maiden made the transition from "my garden" to "his garden." Now the beloved received her gift, and made her **garden** – that is, her sexuality – *his own*. There was a very real sense in which her sexuality now belonged to him (and his to her).

i. The Apostle Paul reinforced this principle in his first letter to the Corinthians: *The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1Co 7:4)*

ii. Of course, this principle could never justify a husband abusing or coercing his wife, sexually or otherwise. Paul's point was that we have a *binding*

*obligation* to serve our marriage partner with physical affection. It is an awesome obligation: out of the billions of people on the earth, God has chosen *one*, and *one alone*, to meet our sexual needs. There is to be no one else.

c. **I have gathered my myrrh with my spice... honeycomb... honey... wine... milk:** Using the images of luxury and satisfaction, the beloved poetically described how pleasing their experience of intimacy was.

i. "So few couples seem to experience that kind of wedding night. Why is this so? Perhaps one reason is that their courtship does not prepare them for it."  
(Glickman)

4. (5:1b) *The comment from heaven.*

**Eat, O friends!**  
**Drink, yes, drink deeply,**  
**O beloved ones!**

a. **Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply:** There is considerable disagreement among commentators as to who speaks these words. Some believe that the groom left the marriage bedroom and spoke to the remaining guests of the wedding party. Others think of an imaginary chorus, such as the previously mentioned

*Daughters of Jerusalem*. On balance, it is best to see these words as divine; an approving statement from heaven, glorying in the goodness and purity of their love.

i. Adam Clarke describes the idea that this was addressed to guests at the wedding party: "These are generally supposed to be the words of the *bridegroom*, after he returned from the *nuptial chamber*, and exhibited those *signs* of his wife's *purity* which the customs of those times required. This being a cause of universal joy, the entertainment is served

up; and he invites his companions, and the friends of both parties, to eat and drink abundantly, as there was such a universal cause of rejoicing.” (Clarke)

b. **O beloved ones:** This was the best of relationships. Not only were the marriage couple deeply in love, but they also were **beloved** of God. We might say that no one was more pleased over their relationship than God Himself. This was the beginning of a *blessed* sexual relationship.

i. “He lifts his voice and gives hearty approval to the entire night. He vigorously endorses and affirms the love of this couple. He takes pleasure in what has taken place.” (Glickman)

**Son 5:1** I have entered my garden, my sweetheart, my bride. I am gathering my spices and myrrh; I am eating my honey and honeycomb; I am drinking my wine and milk. Eat, lovers, and drink until you are drunk with love!

### **The Bride Searches for Her Beloved**

Son 5:2 While I slept, my heart was awake. I dreamed my lover knocked at the door. Let me come in, my darling, my sweetheart, my dove. My head is wet with dew, and my hair is damp from the mist.

Son 5:3 I have already undressed; why should I get dressed again? I have washed my feet; why should I get them dirty again?

Son 5:4 My lover put his hand to the door, and I was thrilled that he was near.

Son 5:5 I was ready to let him come in. My hands were covered with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, as I grasped the handle of the door.

Son 5:6 I opened the door for my lover, but he had already gone. How I wanted to hear his voice! I looked for him, but couldn't find him; I called to him, but heard no answer.

Son 5:7 The sentries patrolling the city found me; they struck me and bruised me; the guards at the city wall tore off my cape.

Son 5:8 Promise me, women of Jerusalem, that if you find my lover, you will tell him I am weak from passion.

Son 5:9 Most beautiful of women, is your lover different from everyone else? What is there so wonderful about him that we should give you our promise?

### **The Bride Praises Her Beloved**

Son 5:10 My lover is handsome and strong; he is one in ten thousand.

Son 5:11 His face is bronzed and smooth; his hair is wavy, black as a raven.

Son 5:12 His eyes are as beautiful as doves by a flowing brook, doves washed in milk and standing by the stream.

Son 5:13 His cheeks are as lovely as a garden that is full of herbs and spices. His lips are like lilies, wet with liquid myrrh.

Son 5:14 His hands are well-formed, and he wears rings set with gems. His body is like smooth ivory, with sapphires set in it.

Son 5:15 His thighs are columns of alabaster set in sockets of gold. He is majestic, like the Lebanon Mountains with their towering cedars.

Son 5:16 His mouth is sweet to kiss; everything about him enchants me. This is what my lover is like, women of Jerusalem.

## **Song of Solomon 5:1-16**

### **Song of Solomon 5 - The Maiden's Dream**

#### **A. The maiden describes her dream.**

1. (2) *The maiden dreams of her beloved coming to her door at night.*

**I sleep, but my heart is awake;  
It is the voice of my beloved!  
He knocks, saying,  
“Open for me, my sister, my love,  
My dove, my perfect one;  
For my head is covered with dew,  
My locks with the drops of the night.”**

a. **I sleep, but my heart is awake:** In this poetic snapshot, the maiden described another dream-like experience. The maiden is described as being either asleep, yet dreaming, or in the twilight of almost-sleep where one is not quite sure if they are awake or asleep.

b. **It is the voice of my beloved:** In her half-awake, half-asleep state the maiden heard the **voice of her beloved** outside her door. He had come, either for an unexpected rendezvous or after a long day of looking after his responsibilities.

c. **He knocks, saying, “Open for me, my sister, my love”:** Having come in some way unexpectedly (perhaps *later* than expected), the beloved found himself locked outside the maiden’s home – which, presumably, was also his own home.

i. It isn’t really important whether this section should be chronologically arranged after or before the wedding and consummation previously described. The emphasis here is not on the married or non-married status of the leading man and woman, but on a difficulty in their relationship.

d. **My sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one:** First the beloved *called* for his maiden, but the sound of his voice was not enough to persuade her to open the

door. Then he *affectionately praised* his maiden, with each of these warm and complimentary terms. Yet this also was not enough to persuade her to open the door.

i. **My sister:** One suggestion with this title is *permanence*. One remains a *sister* forever, and that is how long the beloved wanted to be connected with his maiden.

ii. **My love, my dove:** "The title of *dove* signifies her chastity and constant faithfulness to her Husband, for which doves are famous." (Poole)

iii. **My perfect one:** "The *AVundefiled* suggests 'virgin', but that connotation is absent from the Hebrew. Ethical and moral blamelessness is more the idea." (Carr)

e. **For my head is covered with dew:** The final appeal of the beloved was a description of the discomforts he had endured in seeking after the maiden. Like a shepherd out late at night watching over the flocks, his head was wet with the moisture of the **dew** that covered the land that night.

i. "He alludes to the custom of lovers, which oft and willingly suffer such inconveniences for their hopes and desires of enjoying their beloved." (Poole)

ii. The beloved made several appeals to the maiden:

- *The appeal of his presence*; simply knowing that he sought her out and was at the door might have persuaded the maiden to open the door.

- *The voice of the beloved*; the sound of his call to her should have prompted her to open the door.

- *The specific request*; when the beloved asked, "**Open for me,**" it should have been enough to make the maiden open the door.

- *The warm and affectionate appeal*; the tender and beautiful names that he called the maiden should have melted her heart. Nowhere else in the song does he pour out upon her so many affectionate names.

- *The description of his own discomforts for her sake*; if nothing else, these should have warmed her heart to open the door.

iii. Yet for all this, the maiden did not open the door for the beloved and allow him to enter in!

iv. This picture – of the beloved standing outside the door and appealing to his maiden for entry – may provide the only New Testament reference to the Song of Solomon, found at Rev 3:20 : *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

2. (3-6) *The maiden fails to meet her beloved at the door.*

**I have taken off my robe;  
How can I put it on *again*?  
I have washed my feet;  
How can I defile them?  
My beloved put his hand  
By the latch *of the door*,  
And my heart yearned for him.  
I arose to open for my beloved,  
And my hands dripped *with* myrrh,  
My fingers with liquid myrrh,  
On the handles of the lock.  
I opened for my beloved,  
But my beloved had turned away *and* was gone.  
My heart leaped up when he spoke.  
I sought him, but I could not find him;  
I called him, but he gave me no answer.**



a. **I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again:** In response to the warm appeal of the beloved, the maiden answered only with excuses. She was comfortable in her bed, so he could not come in. She could not be bothered with the inconvenience of dressing herself and preparing herself for sleep again (**I have washed my feet; how can I defile them?**).

i. **How can I:** "Often it is found in songs of mourning or lamentation, and here reflects a petulant unwillingness to act rather than the impossibility of action... she appears unwilling to put herself to any trouble even for her lover." (Carr)

ii. **My robe:** "It is the garment worn next to the skin, not the 'garment' of Son 4:11 which served as a bed-covering, nor the common *begged* which was used to described clothing in general. Delitzsch's comment 'she lies unclothed in bed', catches the precise meaning of the colon." (Carr)

iii. Perhaps she was simply not willing to be inconvenienced; perhaps she did not appreciate the unexpected nature of the beloved's visit; perhaps he came much later than she had expected him, and therefore she felt annoyed. Perhaps this was her effort to control the relationship ("Why should I run as soon as he knocks? He can wait a little while.") Whatever the specific reason, she refused to promptly rise from bed and open the door.

iv. Her problem was not that she didn't go to the door; but that she did it so slowly and reluctantly, making excuses all along the way. "This attitude shows an insensitive spirit. She was thinking only about her comfort and not at all about Solomon's desires or her relationship with him." (Estes)

v. "This is a remarkable picture of the kind of adjustments that are necessary in life style in marriage. Our natural sloth, the differences between a man and a woman, our uncertainty about the other's thinking, the variations in our life rhythms, our unwillingness to alter our preferred patterns for the other, our own self-consciousness – all contribute to the problem of reading each other's advances." (Kinlaw)

vi. "Although this romance is an ideal, it is not a fantasy. It is realistic, and presents the realistic problems of marriage... also the principles for solving them." (Glickman)

**b. My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door:**

The maiden could hear that the **beloved** put his hand upon the latch mechanism of the door. This was a clear (and final) indication of his desire to enter and be with her, *but only at her invitation*. The beloved would not break or force the **latch** of the door but insisted that the way be opened to him.

i. Some commentators and translators have wondered if the wording here presents a *double entendre*, cleverly describing sexual intercourse between the beloved and the maiden. The basis for this is found in the fact that on at least one occasion (Isa 57:8) in the Old Testament, this Hebrew word translated **hand** is a euphemism for the male sexual organ. In addition, the word translated **latch of the door** is more literally "opening" or "hole."

ii. The idea behind this *double entendre* is better illustrated by comparing some other translations of the phrase:

- NIV: *My lover thrust his hand through the latch-opening.*

- NASB: *My beloved extended his hand through the opening.*
- LXX: *My kinsman put forth his hand by the hole of the door.*
- KJV: *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door.*
- NLT: *My lover tried to unlatch the door.*

iii. While allowing for the slight possibility of such a *double entendre*, it clearly is not the direct meaning of the section, as demonstrated by the context. The idea of the couple engaged in intercourse does not match the context, which places the beloved as *outside* the presence of the maiden, which is the dynamic that drives the entire section. If anything, the *double entendre* may refer to the conflicted sexual longings within the maiden (especially with the phrase, **my heart yearned for him**). She obviously loved and longed for her beloved yet refused to promptly open the door for him.

iv. "If it were a *real scene*, which is mentioned in this and the two following verses, it must refer, from the well-known use of the *metaphors*, to matrimonial endearments. Or, it may refer to his *attempts to open the door*, when she hesitated to arise, on the grounds mentioned. But this also bears every evidence of a *dream*." (Clarke)

v. "None of this is decisive, of course, but as Cook notes, the *double entendre* by nature is 'so delicate as to leave some doubt about its presence at a specific point'. Nevertheless, this appears to be one text where the erotic meaning is present. If *yad* does mean the male member here, *hor* is its female counterpart." (Carr)

c. **I arose to open for my beloved:** It wasn't that the maiden *refused* to open for her **beloved**; it was that she long delayed to do so, and delayed out of self-interest and self-indulgence, probably connected with some resentment towards the beloved.

i. Here the writer gave us an emotionally accurate picture of the dynamic of conflict in a relationship, especially in marriage.

- The maiden felt resentment towards the beloved (the nature and reasonableness of that resentment is impossible to determine).
- The beloved refused to force himself upon his maiden and would only enter at her invitation.
- The beloved made a true and persistent appeal to his maiden, that they might be together and enjoy their relationship.
- Because of her resentment, the maiden long delayed her response to the desire of the beloved.
- When she finally did respond, it seemed too late – the moment had passed, and her beloved was gone.

ii. In applying this dynamic of conflict to a relationship, one may fairly reverse the roles of maiden/beloved and wife/husband, but the fundamental principles remain. Significant damage may be done to a relationship by:

- Holding on to resentments and refusing to be generous with forgiveness.
- The attempt to force one's interest and affections upon another, and not waiting for their response.
- Refusing or delaying response when approached in a loving and persistent way.

- Failing to appreciate the value of an appeal to resume or build relationship, typically out of self-interest and self-indulgence, or a desire to control the relationship.

d. **And my hands dripped with myrrh:** As the maiden finally rose from bed and came to the door, she noticed that the door or the latch of the door had been anointed with sweet perfume. This was another reminder of the beauty and the quality of his love for her.

i. According to Clarke, it was a custom among some ancient peoples to anoint doors used by a bride with fragrant oils, and this same custom (or some form of it) may have existed among the ancient Jews. (Clarke)

ii. "He simply left her a 'love note' and then went away. In their culture a lover would leave this fragrant myrrh at the door as a sign that he had been there." (Glickman)

iii. His response – not of anger, not of objection, but simply a non-threatening display of love – would soon awaken a loving response in her. This is a wonderful picture of the way a husband should respond when he feels disrespected by his wife; instead of angrily demanding respect, he should instead display his love for her in a non-threatening way and wait for the response of love to her.

e. **I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone:** When the maiden finally came to the door – shaking off her previous self-indulgence, laziness, and perhaps desire to control the relationship – she found that her beloved **was gone**. She was too late.

i. "The presence and comfort of her Bridegroom are again lost to her; not this time by relapse into worldliness, but by slothful self-indulgence... And more than this, the door of her chamber was not only closed, but barred; an evidence that His return was neither eagerly desired nor expected." (Taylor)

f. **I called him, but he gave me no answer:** Now the roles were reversed. Where once the beloved called for the maiden and heard no response, now the maiden calls for him but hears **no answer**. She had foolishly waited too long to respond, actually working against her own self-interest.

i. If we consider this all happening, it lends to the idea that this is in fact a dream sequence of the maiden. In the sense of the text, it does not seem that she lingered so long that when she did open the door it was too late to see where he went. Yet in the creative nature of dreams, it is entirely natural. In whatever sense dreams make, the slowness of her response was directly connected to her difficulty in finding him.

3. (7-8) *The maiden's disappointing search for her beloved.*

**The watchmen who went about the city found me.**

**They struck me, they wounded me;**

**The keepers of the walls**

**Took my veil away from me.**

**I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,**

**If you find my beloved,**

**That you tell him I *am* lovesick!**

a. **The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me:** In her dream, the maiden sought and called for her beloved (Son 5:6), extending her search to the streets of the **city**. This ended only in disappointment, because she did

not find her beloved, nor did she find any help from **the watchmen** or from **the keepers of the walls**.

i. Since this happened in a dream and not in reality, this may reflect the maiden's guilt over her previous response to him (or lack thereof). Kinlaw asks this question: "Does this treatment by the watchmen reflect the girl's guilt and sense of failure at the slowness of her response to her husband?"

b. **The keepers of the walls took my veil away from me:** In her dream, not only was the maiden unsuccessful, but those who did not sympathize enough with her search also mistreated her.

i. This **veil** is probably better understood as a scarf or mantle; it is a distinctly different article of clothing mentioned in Son 1:7; Son 4:3; Son 4:11; Son 5:3.

c. **Tell him I am lovesick:** The maiden's plea to the **daughters of Jerusalem** shows that she came to regret and suffer under her previous actions. Now she was **lovesick**, but not at all in same sense as previously mentioned in Son 2:5. Previously she was overwhelmed by the presence of love; here she was aching at its absence.

i. "There is a realism in the Song that merits our respect. The course of true love seldom runs smoothly for long. For every moment of ecstasy, there seems to be the moment of hurt and pain." (Kinlaw)

ii. By application to spiritual life, we may say that there are some sicknesses that are unique to the saints:

- Sin-sickness, when the soul hates sin and wants nothing to do with it.

- Self-sickness, when the soul comes to hate self-indulgence, self-seeking, self-exalting, and self-reliance of every sort.
- Love-sickness of the first type, when the believer is so deeply moved by the love of God that they feel they can hardly bear it.
- Love-sickness of the second type, when the believer feels distanced from or deserted by Jesus, and longs for a renewed sense of closeness.

iii. Spurgeon described this second type of lovesickness in this way: "It is the longing of a soul, then, not for salvation, and not even for the certainty of salvation, but for the enjoyment of present fellowship with him who is her soul's life, her soul's all... It is a panting after communion." (Spurgeon)

## **B. The maiden describes her beloved.**

1. (9) *The Daughters of Jerusalem ask about the beloved.*

**What *is* your beloved  
More than *another* beloved,  
O fairest among women?  
What *is* your beloved  
More than *another* beloved,  
That you so charge us?**

a. **What is your beloved more than another beloved:** The dream-sequence request to the daughters of Jerusalem in the previous verse (Son 5:8) now had a response. In essence, the daughters of Jerusalem wanted to know what was so special about the maiden's **beloved**. They wanted an explanation as for why she was so *lovesick* (Son 5:8) and why she so desperately sought him.

i. "Her anguish at her loss was so extreme, her heart-sickness was so agonizing, her frenzy so bewildering,



that they were startled into feeling that he of whom she was bereft was no common lover.” (Meyer)

b. **O fairest among women:** This may have been spoken sarcastically, because (in her dream) the maiden’s appearance may have been neglected by her rapid rising, her frantic search, and her mistreatment by the watchmen (Son 5:7).

2. (10-16) *The maiden responds by describing the beloved.*

**My beloved *is* white and ruddy,  
Chief among ten thousand.  
His head *is like* the finest gold;  
His locks *are* wavy,  
And black as a raven.  
His eyes *are* like doves  
By the rivers of waters,  
Washed with milk,  
And fitly set.  
His cheeks *are* like a bed of spices,  
Banks of scented herbs.  
His lips *are* lilies,  
Dripping liquid myrrh.  
His hands *are* rods of gold  
Set with beryl.  
His body *is* carved ivory  
Inlaid *with* sapphires.  
His legs *are* pillars of marble  
Set on bases of fine gold.  
His countenance *is* like Lebanon,  
Excellent as the cedars.  
His mouth *is* most sweet,  
Yes, he *is* altogether lovely.  
This *is* my beloved,  
And this *is* my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem!**

a. **My beloved is:** With this, the maiden began an extended description of her **beloved**, somewhat answering to his description of her in Son 4:1-7. It showed she could be as eloquent in describing him as he was in describing her.

i. "Love songs describing the physical beauty of the beloved are common in the ancient Near East, but most of them describe the female. Such detailed description of the male, as here, is seldom recorded." (Carr)

ii. The description uses many figures of speech and expressions that sound strange to us, but the main idea is unmistakable. She was attracted to her beloved both by his character and by his physical appearance. "Here she may seem to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, performing, as lovers used to do, that for him that he had done for her before." (Trapp)

iii. "Instead of thinking of herself, she started thinking of her beloved. Instead of wanting her comfort and convenience, she desired to nurture the relationships she had started to take for granted." (Estes)

iv. Curiously, in the context of her dream, she did not say these things to her beloved, but she said these things *about* him in the presence of others. It was more important for *her* to be convinced of these things than it was for *him* to hear them.

b. **My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand:** Here she described both his countenance (**white and ruddy**) and his greatness (**chief among ten thousand**). She loved him not only for who he was to her, but also for the greatness of his character and accomplishments.

i. **Ruddy**: "Most commentators take this simply as the normal complexion of a healthy young man." According to Carr, the ancient Hebrew word is *adom*, and Carr says: "The Hebrew noun *adam*, 'man', is a more likely source for the term here, in which case, her lover is 'manly'."

ii. This admiration of a man's greatness is a strong motivator for accomplishment among men. A man very much wants his wife to recognize whatever greatness or accomplishments he has attained.

iii. "The metaphors are ancient Near Eastern ones, but the import is clear: he is one in ten thousand." (Kinlaw)

c. **His head is like the finest gold; his locks are wavy**: The maiden saw her beloved as radiant and attractive, from beginning with his head and continuing down in her description of his appearance. His **head is like the finest gold**, with the idea that his face is well-proportioned and colored, with the idea of quality and prestige.

d. **His eyes are like doves by the rivers of waters... His cheeks are like a bed of spices... His hands are rods of gold... His countenance is like Lebanon, as excellent as the cedars**: The description is of a man who is more than attractive, but also strong and of great character.

i. **Washed with milk, and fitly set**: "The sense appears to be describing the contrast of the iris with the white of the eye, both

*fitly set* (NIV*mounted like jewels*) in the face." (Carr)

ii. **His cheeks are like a bed of spices**: "But it has been supposed to refer to his *beard*, which in a *young well-made man* is exceedingly beautiful. I have seen

young Turks, who had taken much care of their beards, mustachios, &c., look majestic. Scarcely any thing serves to set off the human face to greater advantage than the *beard*, when kept in proper order. Females admire it in their *suitors* and *husbands*. I have known cases, where they not only *despised* but *execrated* Europeans, whose faces were close shaved. The men perfume their beards often; and this may be what is intended by *spices* and *sweet-smelling myrrh*." (Clarke)

iii. **His countenance is like Lebanon:** "As Lebanon exalts its head beyond all the other mountains near Jerusalem, so my beloved is tall and majestic, and surpasses in stature and majesty all other men." (Clarke)

iv. Watchman Nee approached this book primarily as an allegory describing the relationship between Jesus and His people. On that basis, he took the features of this description and allegorically applied them to Jesus.

- **White and ruddy:** "The ruddy complexion of perfect health. This indicated that He was vibrant with fullness of life and power."

- **His head is like the finest gold:** "This is a description of His divine attributes. He possessed God's life and God's glory."

- **His locks are wavy, and black as a raven:** "An indication of His everlasting vigor and power."

- **His eyes are like doves:** "Eyes are the seat of expression, and this description also speaks of an intimacy known by the spouse."

- **His cheeks are like a bed of spices, banks of scented herbs:** "These same cheeks had undergone

much shame and despite... No wonder, then, that such a believer as this one looked upon His cheeks as a bed of fragrant spices or scented herbs."

- **His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh:** "The 'lilies' referred to here speak of kingly glory... How glorious were the teachings of Christ! And how sweet were the words which dropped from His lips!"

- **His hands are rods of gold:** "The strength of His hands to establish firmly and bring to completion the purposes of God."

- **His body is carved ivory:** "The Lord Jesus, too, was a Person rich with the deepest sensibilities, that He was moved with great feelings of love for His people."

- **His legs are pillars of marble:** "They signify His power to stand... as having immovable stability."

- **His countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars:** "Shows something of His elevated character. Though a Man, yet He was now a Man glorified in the heights of heaven."

- **His mouth is most sweet:** "It speaks of a certain aspect of His mediatorial work."

v. Spurgeon mused on this spiritual analogy, and the importance of the believer considering Jesus: "When you get sick, and sad, and weary of God's people, turn your thoughts to God himself; and if ever you see any spots in the Church, Christ's bride, look at her glorious Husband, and you will only love him the more as you think of his wondrous condescension in having loved such a poor thing as his Church is even at her best." (Spurgeon)

e. **Yes, he is altogether lovely:** She summarized her description with this one general phrase. In her mind,

there was something complete and great in his physical appearance and standing as a man.

i. "The force of the whole unit is that in the girl's eyes her lover (be he king or peasant) is beyond comparison." (Carr) He was tall, dark, and handsome; with a tanned face and dark hair, but his eyes were soft and tender. His cologne smelled good and his hands were so strong and gentle that they were as precious as gold. He was strongly built from head to toe and most of all had a dignified bearing.

ii. If we apply this to the relationship between the believer and Jesus Christ, these descriptions give a sense of how greatly the believer prizes their Lord. "But all of these gathered together are poor and unworthy emblems of the peerless beauty of Emmanuel. White in purity, ruddy with the bloodstain, his bushy locks emblematical of immortal youth, his eyes like waterbrooks reflecting the deep azure of the sky and telling of eternal love. Ransack earth for metaphors, and they fall short of the truth. Words fail to express his beauty, his loveliness: let us try to reflect his glory." (Meyer)

iii. Some things are beautiful from one angle, and not from another. Some are beautiful when they are younger, but not when they are older. Some things look beautiful from a distance, but not up close. Some things are beautiful in one way, but not in another. Jesus is **altogether lovely**; yet for all of His beauty and perfection, it is almost entirely unappreciated by the world. "The vain world cannot see in him a virtue to admire. It is a blind world, a fool world, a world that lieth in the wicked one. Not to discern the beauties of Jesus is an evidence of terrible depravity. Have you, my dear friend, frankly to confess that you

were never enamoured of him who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and went about doing good?" (Spurgeon)

f. **This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem:** The maiden assured herself of how highly she prized her **beloved**, happily calling him her **friend**. We sense a confidence and strength of conviction in these words.

i. "The Bride replies by describing him in all the wealth of oriental imagery. Yet any other woman might have used every figure in describing her beloved. But, at last, and as I think half unconsciously, the truth is out as she said: 'This is *my* beloved, and this is *my* friend.'" (Morgan)

ii. **This is my friend:** "A common Old Testament word, *rea* expresses companionship and friendship without the overtones of sexual partnership... friendship goes far deeper than mere sexual compatibility and excitement. Happy is the husband or wife whose spouse is also a friend." (Carr)

iii. "The Song of Solomon is unabashedly erotic. Yet it is never satisfied to be content with the physical alone. A normal person finds the erotic ultimately meaningful only if there is trust and commitment, delight in the other's person as well as in their body. The writer of the Song understands this. Our hero is her lover, but he is more: he is her friend." (Kinlaw)

iv. The conclusion of the maiden leads to the logical question: "Then why were you so slow in responding to his call? How could you risk losing such an **altogether lovely** one?" Brought back to a fresh appreciation of the one she loved, the maiden was all the more sorrowful for her prior selfish response.

v. A wife may think that this is the kind of man she could love; but she should probably remember that at one time, her husband *was* this kind of man. She can see him that way again. Instead of thinking "I deserve better than him," she started being amazed at what she once had and still does. Of course, the exact same reasoning applies to a husband in reference to his wife.

**Son 6:1** Most beautiful of women, where has your lover gone? Tell us which way your lover went, so that we can help you find him.

### **Together in the Garden of Love**

Son 6:2 My lover has gone to his garden, where the balsam trees grow. He is feeding his flock in the garden and gathering lilies.

Son 6:3 My lover is mine, and I am his; he feeds his flock among the lilies.

### **Solomon and His Bride Delight in Each Other**

Son 6:4 My love, you are as beautiful as Jerusalem, as lovely as the city of Tirzah, as breathtaking as these great cities.

Son 6:5 Turn your eyes away from me; they are holding me captive. Your hair dances like a flock of goats bounding down the hills of Gilead.

Son 6:6 Your teeth are as white as a flock of sheep that have just been washed. Not one of them is missing; they are all perfectly matched.

Son 6:7 Your cheeks glow behind your veil.

Son 6:8 Let the king have sixty queens, eighty concubines, young women without number!

Son 6:9 But I love only one, and she is as lovely as a dove. She is her mother's only daughter, her mother's favorite



child. All women look at her and praise her; queens and concubines sing her praises.

Son 6:10 Who is this whose glance is like the dawn? She is beautiful and bright, as dazzling as the sun or the moon.

Son 6:11 I have come down among the almond trees to see the young plants in the valley, to see the new leaves on the vines and the blossoms on the pomegranate trees.

Son 6:12 I am trembling; you have made me as eager for love as a chariot driver is for battle.

Son 6:13 Dance, dance, girl of Shulam. Let us watch you as you dance. Why do you want to watch me as I dance between the rows of onlookers?

## **Song of Solomon 6:1-13**

### **Song of Solomon 6 - Reunited in Love**

#### **A. The maiden describes a restoration of their love relationship.**

*1. (1) A further question from the Daughters of Jerusalem.*

**Where has your beloved gone,  
O fairest among women?**

**Where has your beloved turned aside,  
That we may seek him with you?**

a. **Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women:** Continuing the thought from the previous chapter, it is difficult to tell if these on looking friends are supporting the maiden or being sarcastic towards her.

b. **Where has your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you:** More important than the *tone* of the question in the previous line was this second question. After hearing the impressive description of the character and appearance of the **beloved**, the Daughters of Jerusalem wanted to know where the **beloved** was, and if they could help her locate him.

2. (2-3) *The maiden describes her relationship to her beloved man.*

**My beloved has gone to his garden,  
To the beds of spices,  
To feed *his flock* in the gardens,  
And to gather lilies.  
I *am* my beloved's,  
And my beloved *is* mine.  
He feeds *his flock* among the lilies.**

a. **My beloved has gone to his garden, to the beds of spices:** Previously in the Song of Solomon (Son 4:12; Son 4:16; Son 5:1) the image of the **garden** was used to represent the sexuality of the maiden.

i. Yet here that image seems out of place; if the **beloved** had **gone to his garden**, then why did it seem that the maiden was still searching for him? It seems best to regard this as a simple reference to a literal **garden**. The maiden remembered that her **beloved** would be a familiar outdoor place **to feed is flock in the gardens**.

ii. Interestingly, the maiden's previous search through the city accomplished nothing and in fact only harmed her. Yet when she (in response to the questions from the Daughters of Jerusalem) thought about how wonderful her beloved was and where he might be, she was able to figure it out.

iii. "The bride's response to the friends' inquiry assures them that she has not really lost him. The anxiety in her dream was without foundation in reality." (Kinlaw)

iv. Her initial reaction to their relationship problems was entirely feeling-based with little or no thought

behind the reaction. When she began to think through the fundamentals of her relationship (Who is my beloved? Where can I find him?), things began to make sense.

v. This reminds us that for success in a Christian marriage, we must *think* and *understand*. The world relies upon mistaken ideas of romantic love and feelings to make marriage work, and never really makes a person *think* and *understand* about marriage.

**b. To feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies:** When the maiden thought about where her beloved would be, she remembered that he would be doing his work (**to feed his flock**) and looking for ways to show his love to her (**to gather lilies**).

i. We can say that the maiden understood some basic things that contributed to the restoration of relationship.

- She knew where he had gone – to his favorite (literal) garden.
- She knew that though they were separated, they still belonged to each other.
- She knew her husband was like a gentle shepherd, who would want to restore the relationship.

**c. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:** The remembrance of these things – who her beloved is, where she is, and what he would be doing – filled the maiden with a renewed sense of their connection and oneness with each other.

i. This is where she wanted to be; this is opposite to the attitude of self-indulgence and laziness shown in the first part of Song of Solomon 5. She is back where she wanted to be, but she did not get there by

focusing on her own feelings; rather by thinking and understanding. *Now* feelings came into the picture, and in a wonderful way.

ii. **I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine** is also an important description of the idea of *oneness*. The maiden sensed and valued their spiritual, emotional, physical, and life connection. From the Apostle Paul's strong and repeated exhortations of this principle of oneness to husbands (and from life experience), one might reasonably understand that women tend to sense and value oneness in marriage by instinct; men have to learn to sense and value it.

iii. "The ability of a couple to succeed in their marriage is equal to the ability of that couple to forgive and accept forgiveness.... When this willingness on the part of both becomes a habit, then the bubble of romance that began their relationship will become a diamond that will last forever." (Glickman)

iv. In Son 2:16 the maiden said: *My beloved is mine, and I am his*. Here she says, **I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine**. Some people note that in the first the emphasis is on *what belongs to her*; in the second the emphasis is on *whom she belongs to*. Perhaps she found it was a more wonderful thing for her to belong to him than for her to "have" him.

## **B. Enjoyment of the restored relationship.**

1. (4-7) *The beloved describes the physical appearance of his maiden.*

**O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah,  
Lovely as Jerusalem,  
Awesome as an army with banners!  
Turn your eyes away from me,  
For they have overcome me.**

**Your hair *is* like a flock of goats  
Going down from Gilead.  
Your teeth *are* like a flock of sheep  
Which have come up from the washing;  
Every one bears twins,  
And none *is* barren among them.  
Like a piece of pomegranate  
Are your temples behind your veil.**

a. **O my love:** These are the words of the beloved to the maiden. They are together again, and the warmth of their restored relationship is evident in this section.

b. **You are as beautiful as Tizrah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners:** The beloved compared the beauty and stature of the maiden to noble and beautiful cities (**Tizrah** and **Jerusalem**). She was as impressive as an **army with banners**, ready for battle.

i. "Tirzah was an ancient Canaanite center that served as the capital of the northern kingdom before Omri (c. 879 B.C.) established Samaria as the capital. This reference is a strong indication of an early date for the origin of the Song." (Kinlaw)

ii. "Tirzah was a city in the tribe of Ephraim, (Jos 12:24), and the capital of that district. It appears to have been *beautiful in itself*, and *beautifully situated*, for Jeroboam made it his residence before *Samaria* was built; and it seems to have been the ordinary residence of the kings of *Israel*, 1Ki 14:17; 1Ki 15:21; 1Ki 16:6. Its *name* signifies *beautiful* or *delightful*." (Clarke)

iii. There is not a hint of bitterness or unforgiveness on the part of the beloved. There had been a disruption of their relationship (shown in Son 5:2-8) that was largely her fault. Yet the offended party in

this relationship was quick to forgive and restore relationship.

c. **Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me:** This was high praise, expressed with poetic beauty. "Look away – I am so excited by the beauty of your eyes that I can't take it!"

i. "Her eyes have been noted as very beautiful and seductive several times already (Son 1:15; Son 4:1; Son 4:9), and the motif is carried out here." (Carr)

ii. "But it is otherwise in Christ: majesty and love, even unto ravishment, meet in his holy heart. If the Church be sick of love toward him, she should know that he is overcome with love towards her, and that there is no love lost betwixt them." (Trapp)

iii. Spurgeon related Son 6:5 to Jesus and the church, noting that Jesus is overcome with love when He looks upon the church. This was true before the incarnation, as He walked this earth, and now that He has ascended into heaven.

- The eyes that show repentance overcome Him.
- The eyes that mourn over sin overcome Him.
- The eyes that look to Jesus for salvation overcome Him.
- The eyes that long for assurance of salvation overcome Him.
- The eyes that trust Him and look to Him for all provision overcome Him.
- Their eyes of prayer overcome Him.

d. **Your hair is like a flock of goats...:** The beloved continued to describe the maiden, using many of the same images previously used in Son 4:1-5. When she

returned to him, he told her the same kind of things he told her on their wedding night. It was his way of saying, "I love you and value you just as much now as then."

i. Yet, he avoided description of her more sensual physical features – lips, breasts (as he had described), or hips (as he will later describe). He wanted to avoid the idea that the only reason he wanted to make up with her was to make her willing for sex. This was both good and wise of the beloved.

ii. At the same time in the following verses he *added* some compliments that were good for the sake of reconciliation, reminding her how favorably she compared to others.

2. (8-10) *The beloved describes his maiden as compared to other women.*

**There are sixty queens  
And eighty concubines,  
And virgins without number.  
My dove, my perfect one,  
Is the only one,  
The only one of her mother,  
The favorite of the one who bore her.  
The daughters saw her  
And called her blessed,  
The queens and the concubines,  
And they praised her.  
Who is she who looks forth as the morning,  
Fair as the moon,  
Clear as the sun,  
Awesome as *an army* with banners?**

a. **There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one:** This goes beyond the description of the maiden's beauty recorded in the previous verse.

Here he praises the maiden *in comparison to* other women. It is important – even vital – for a wife to feel not only beautiful but *preferred above others* in the eyes of her husband.

i. “He did not go off in a dream world, feel sorry for himself, and wish he had married someone else. Such an attitude, in fact, would only have compounded the problem. Quite the opposite, he very creatively and compassionately assured her of his forgiveness. She was still the girl he married, and he was thankful for her.” (Glickman)

b. **Queens... concubines... virgins:** The mention of these other women makes us wonder if Solomon wrote this when he had more than one wife (he eventually had 700 wives and 300 concubines according to

1Ki 11:3).

i. The beauty and intensity of the romantic love described in the Song of Solomon does not seem to come from a man who actually romanced and loved many woman (and they came to ruin him spiritually according to 1Ki 11:1-4). There are a few possible explanations for this problem:

- Solomon wrote this as a young man on the occasion of his *first* love, his *true* love. Of all the 700 wives, *one* had to be first, and the maiden of the Song of Solomon was this one. If this is true, then the reference to the **queens, concubines, and virgins** was simply theoretical and does not describe women that actually belonged Solomon.

- Solomon wrote this as a middle-aged man with many wives and concubines (though perhaps somewhat early in the count), meaning that he wrote this about an ideal that he did not live or benefit



from. If this is true, then the reference to the **queens, concubines, and virgins** is literal.

- Solomon wrote this as a man late in life, having tasted the good and ideal but wasting the vast majority of his life upon foolish romances and sexual liaisons; he wrote this remembering the ideal and attempting to promote it to others. If this is true, then the reference to the **queens, concubines, and virgins** is theoretical.

- ii. "The relatively small numbers, *sixty* and *eighty*, are supposed by Delitzsch to indicate this episode took place early in Solomon's reign before his harem grew to its fullest number. More probably, no particular harem is being considered. Note the text does not say 'Solomon has' or 'I have', but it is a simple declaration: *There are...* and my beloved 'is unique'." (Carr)

c. **The only one of her mother, the favorite of the one who bore her:** This statement is difficult to understand; **the only one** should probably be understood as not meaning that she had no siblings (brothers and sisters seem to be indicated in Son 8:8). Instead it emphasizes her preferred and **favorite** status.

d. **The daughters saw her and called her blessed, the queens and concubines, and they praised her:** The greatness and beauty of the maiden was evident not only to the beloved, but also to her woman companions (and theoretical rivals).

- i. "One of the best ways to praise someone is to mention the nice things other people have said about that person." (Glickman)

e. **Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners:** This high and poetic praise

assured the maiden that her relationship with her beloved was truly reconciled. There was no lingering bitterness or withheld forgiveness.

i. He “did not fall prey to the destructiveness of wounded pride. He did not act in petty revenge; he did not determine to ‘get back’ at his wife. He thought only of assuring her of his forgiveness.” (Glickman)

ii. “Solomon showed us a better way. He did not make Shulamith pay for her insensitivity. He worked on the problem, not on the person. He wanted reconciliation, not retaliation.” (Estes)

iii. Spurgeon considered how the church was also **awesome as an army with banners**, emphasizing the idea of the banner and how the church should be like an army bearing **banners**.

- Banners were carried for *distinction*, so that the army could be clearly identified.
- Banners were carried for *discipline*, so that the army could be organized in its work.
- Banners were carried as a sign of *activity*, indicating that something was about to happen.
- Banners were carried as a sign of *confidence*, willing to engage the enemy.

3. (11-12) *The maiden describes her meeting with the beloved.*

**I went down to the garden of nuts  
To see the verdure of the valley,  
To see whether the vine had budded  
And the pomegranates had bloomed.  
Before I was even aware,  
My soul had made me  
As the chariots of my noble people.**

a. **I went down to the garden:** Presumably, this is where the beloved was (Son 6:2). She happily remembered their reuniting.

i. Watchman Nee gives an example of over-spiritualization here: "Nuts – with their hard shells which require careful cracking before the delicious and nourishing interiors can be extracted – may be likened to the Word of God, which yields its soul-satisfying meats only to those who diligently and with prayer seek to rightly divide the word of truth."

b. **To see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded:** She went to see and to enjoy the coming of *spring*. Springtime was associated (perhaps both literally and symbolically) with the presence and goodness of their love (Son 2:10-13). Their relationship was in springtime again.

i. "Guilt had turned her eyes inward, but he brought them outward. She went down to the garden in self-conscious guilt in hope of renewal, and she was met with praise which turned her eyes from herself to him, and once to him, back to herself through eyes of forgiveness." (Glickman)

c. **Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people:** The reuniting of their relationship, the return of springtime for their love, was so exhilarating to her that the maiden felt that her **soul** was as a free and as fast as a **chariot**.

i. The goodness and depth of their relationship really had been restored. Problems of the past didn't mean that their future was doomed or even hindered. Couples should be confident in faith, knowing that God can restore and bring springtime to troubled relationships.

ii. The following verse implies that perhaps the maiden was actually in a moving chariot; perhaps the prestigious chariot of her beloved, Solomon. The double-meaning of this would strengthen the idea of a complete restoration of relationship, as he honored his maiden with this prestigious luxury. The Revised Standard Version translates with this idea: *Before I was aware, my fancy set me in a chariot beside my prince.*

4. (13a) *The Daughters of Jerusalem appeal to the maiden.*

**Return, return, O Shulamite;**

**Return, return, that we may look upon you!**

a. **Return, return, O Shulamite:** The words seem to have spoken by the Daughters of Jerusalem (or perhaps by the beloved and his friends). They appealed to the maiden who seems to be swept away as in a chariot (Son 6:12), perhaps both literally and figuratively.

i. This is the only verse in the Song of Solomon where the name **Shulamite** is used. It may indicate someone from the Galilean village of Shunam; or the name may also simply be the feminine form of the name *Solomon*, indicating their close unity.

ii. "In the original language in which this song was written, 'Shulamith' was simply the feminine form of the name Solomon, the name of the king. It would be like 'Don and Donna' in our language. The name would thus mean that she was the feminine counterpart of Solomon, his opposite number." (Glickman)

b. **Return, return, that we may look upon you:** The idea is of the speakers calling out to a departing chariot. They wanted the maiden to return so that they might continue enjoying her beauty and goodness, now made

more beautiful because of the lovingly restored relationship she enjoyed.

5. (13b) *The response of the maiden to the Daughters of Jerusalem.*

**What would you see in the Shulamite—  
As it were, the dance of the two camps?**

a. **What would you see in the Shulamite:** The response of the maiden to the plea of the Daughters of Jerusalem shows she has a fundamental humility. She seemed surprised at the attention she received.

i. Some believe that this half-verse is from the beloved, speaking to the Daughters of Jerusalem, and this is possible. "The king remarks in fact that they loved to gaze upon her as intensely as if they were looking upon a festive dance." (Glickman)

b. **As it were, the dance of the two camps:** This statement is difficult to understand. Perhaps it refers to a literal **dance**, as if the maiden was dancing and calling out to the on looking Daughters of Jerusalem. Others emphasize the idea of **two camps** and think it refers to the internal battle of the soul and is a mention of the inner battles the maiden has fought and is fighting.

i. "Suggestions of some sort of sword dance or celebration of bloody military victory seem out of place here." (Carr)

ii. "In v.13 the bride responds to the guests who want to see her. She is modestly reluctant. She questions their desire. If she wonders why anyone would want to see her, she is to get an answer from her lover. The next unit is his description of her charms." (Kinlaw)

**Son 7:1** What a magnificent young woman you are! How beautiful are your feet in sandals. The curve of your thighs

is like the work of an artist.

Son 7:2 A bowl is there, that never runs out of spiced wine. A sheaf of wheat is there, surrounded by lilies.

Son 7:3 Your breasts are like twin deer, like two gazelles.

Son 7:4 Your neck is like a tower of ivory. Your eyes are like the pools in the city of Heshbon, near the gate of that great city. Your nose is as lovely as the tower of Lebanon that stands guard at Damascus.

Son 7:5 Your head is held high like Mount Carmel. Your braided hair shines like the finest satin; its beauty could hold a king captive.

Son 7:6 How pretty you are, how beautiful; how complete the delights of your love.

Son 7:7 You are as graceful as a palm tree, and your breasts are clusters of dates.

Son 7:8 I will climb the palm tree and pick its fruit. To me your breasts are like bunches of grapes, your breath like the fragrance of apples,

Son 7:9 and your mouth like the finest wine. Then let the wine flow straight to my lover, flowing over his lips and teeth.

Son 7:10 I belong to my lover, and he desires me.

### **The Bride Gives Her Love**

Son 7:11 Come, darling, let's go out to the countryside and spend the night in the villages.

Son 7:12 We will get up early and look at the vines to see whether they've started to grow, whether the blossoms are opening and the pomegranate trees are in bloom. There I will give you my love.

Son 7:13 You can smell the scent of mandrakes, and all the pleasant fruits are near our door. Darling, I have kept for you the old delights and the new.

# Song of Solomon 7:1-13

## Song of Solomon 7 - The Maiden's Beauty

### A. The maiden is described for a third time.

1. (1-3) *Description of the maiden's body.*

**How beautiful are your feet in sandals,  
O prince's daughter!  
The curves of your thighs *are* like jewels,  
The work of the hands of a skillful workman.  
Your navel *is* a rounded goblet;  
It lacks no blended beverage.  
Your waist *is* a heap of wheat  
Set about with lilies.  
Your two breasts *are* like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle.**

a. **How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter:** This begins another extended description of the maiden's beauty. Son 6:13 ended with both a request for the maiden to return so her beauty could be longer enjoyed, and a gentle protest from the maiden wondering why she should be such a subject of attention.

i. The mention of *the dance of the two camps* in Son 6:13 suggests that the maiden was dancing. This is also suggested by the description of these verses, which begins at her feet and continues up her body to her head. This would be much more natural in describing someone who was standing and dancing. Yet did she dance before a group of onlookers or privately for her beloved?

ii. There are some reasons to believe that this was a dance before a group of onlookers, such as or including the Daughters of Jerusalem.

- The inherited context from Son 6:13, with a call from the Daughters of Jerusalem.
- The description of the maiden as the **prince's daughter** seems more appropriate from those other than the beloved.
- The description of *a king* in Son 7:5 may be more appropriate in the voice of someone other than the beloved.

iii. There are also some reasons to believe that this was a private dance for the beloved; mainly, the description suggests that the maiden's **thighs, navel, waist, and breasts** could all be seen (at least partially). There is nothing in Biblical or ancient Hebrew culture or in the Song of Solomon itself to suggest that it was a practice for a maiden to dance provocatively before a public group. Given this, it is probable that this is merely a poetic image and not a news report, *or* a private display for the blessing and benefit of the beloved.

iv. It is also important to notice that this is the *third* extended description of the maiden's beauty (previously also in Son 4:1-5; Son 6:4-9). These three descriptions may be compared to the single description of the beloved's appearance (found in Son 5:10-16), which was not even spoken to the beloved himself, but to others about the beloved. This comparison strengthens the impression that it is far more important for a woman to be assured of and confident in her beauty than it is for a man.

- The first description of beauty (Son 4:1-5) is in the context of the wedding night; the beloved praised the beauty of the maiden before she yielded her virginity to him.



- The second description of beauty (Son 6:4-9) is the context of restoring a relationship after a conflict; the beloved assured the maiden that she was just as beautiful to him then as she was on the wedding night.

- This third description of beauty (Son 7:1-5) is perhaps a more public description, further assuring the maiden of her beauty.

v. "It should be noticed that, though the Song is really the bride's song there are three occasions when the groom describes her beauty in detail and only one where she reciprocates. If the Song has any allegorical significance, it should indicate that God finds us much more delightful than we find him." (Kinlaw)

vi. **Prince's daughter:** "As in 6:12, the meaning is not necessarily that the girl is of royal birth, but rather that she is of gracious and noble character and person." (Carr)

b. **How beautiful are your feet in sandals:** As the maiden danced, the onlookers naturally first noticed her **feet in sandals**. They admired both the beauty of her **feet** and her **sandals**.

c. **The curves of your thighs... your navel... your waist:** The description visually moves up from the feet of the maiden, describing the beauty of her body.

i. If we assume that these are the comments of the beloved made in a private setting, the comment of Glickman makes sense: "One of the things we notice is that the praise of the king is much more sensual and intimate. It reflects a greater knowledge of their physical beauty of his wife. For example, here he

praises the curves of her thigh and soft warmth of her stomach." (Glickman)

ii. "Wine and wheat were the basic foods of any meal. His joining these two images in his praise of her stomach must mean that her stomach is like a wonderful feast to him." (Glickman)

iii. "The reference to the lilies that encircle the stomach reminds us that we are dealing with figures whose very ambiguity enrich the eroticism of the passage." (Kinlaw)

iv. The comments of the old Puritan commentator John Trapp show the difficulty of approaching the text primarily as a spiritual allegory. "The navel is baptism, that nourisheth newborn babes in the womb of the Church... Some understand hereby that other sacrament of the Lord's Supper, called a 'heap of wheat,' for its store of excellent nourishment." (Trapp)

v. **Set about with lilies:** Some believe that this is a poetic reference to the pubic region, describing the maiden's naked body. This is unlikely, especially given the use of **lilies** in Son 4:5; Son 5:13.

d. **Your two breasts are like two fawns:** This is an image repeated from the first description of the maiden in Son 4:1-5. There as well as here the emphasis seems to be on the idea is that the maiden's breasts look as innocent and attractive as young deer, as well as matching in their form and beauty (**twins of a gazelle**).

i. Trapp can't escape the instinct to make these **two breasts** something other than two female breasts. "Fresh and lusty, even and equal. Understand the two Testaments; hereunto resembled for their perfect agreement, amiable proportion, and swift running all the world over in a short time." (Trapp)

- ii. "This poem indicates the perpetual charm of the female form to the male." (Kinlaw)

2. (4-5) *Description of the maiden's head, face, and hair.*

**Your neck *is* like an ivory tower,  
Your eyes *like* the pools in Heshbon  
By the gate of Bath Rabbim.  
Your nose *is* like the tower of Lebanon  
Which looks toward Damascus.  
Your head *crowns* you like Mount Carmel,  
And the hair of your head *is* like purple;  
A king *is* held captive by *your* tresses.**

a. **Your neck is like an ivory tower:** The idea with this image isn't so much of an extremely long neck, but of one that communicate nobility and strength of character.

- i. "He is probably complimenting not only the noble dignity exemplified in her posture but also the artistic smoothness of her neck. As he gently slid his fingers down her neck it was smooth as ivory to him." (Glickman)

b. **Your eyes like the pools in Heshbon:** Here the deep beauty of the maiden's eyes is described. Perhaps there was something particularly beautiful about these specific **pools** of water.

- i. "Possibly here were two fish-pools, which being conveniently seated in a large field, might bear some resemblance to the eyes placed in the head." (Poole)

c. **Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus:** It seems that the **tower of Lebanon** was not a literal tower, but a hill or mountain whose white cliffs looked out **toward Damascus**. This would make this a reference more to the color of the maiden's nose than the size or shape of it.

i. "*Lebanon* is one of several words derived from the Hebrew root *laben*, 'to be white'. It was probably the whiteness of the limestone cliffs that gave the mountain its name. This suggests that the imagery here is associated with the colour of her nose rather than its shape or size. Her face is pale, like the ivory tone of her neck, not sunburnt." (Carr)

d. **Your head crowns you... a king is held captive by your tresses:** The beauty of her hair is so striking that it can only be related to *royalty (is like purple)* and captivates royals (**a king is held captive**).

i. **Tresses:** "The root meaning is to run or flow, so that the picture here is of her hair having the appearance of running, rippling water." (Carr)

ii. "On their wedding night he could give sevenfold praise, but on this later night he could give tenfold praise. Their love had truly deepened." (Glickman)

### 3. (6-9a) *Description of the beloved's desire.*

**How fair and how pleasant you are,  
O love, with your delights!**

**This stature of yours is like a palm tree,  
And your breasts *like* its clusters.**

**I said, "I will go up to the palm tree,  
I will take hold of its branches."**

**Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine,  
The fragrance of your breath like apples,  
And the roof of your mouth like the best wine.**

a. **How fair and how pleasant you are, O love:** Here it seems clear that it is the beloved speaking, and not a group such as the Daughters of Jerusalem. If it is true that such a group spoke the words of Son 7:1-5, then clearly now the beloved speaks to his maiden more directly about his attraction to her and desire for her.

i. **With your delights** indicates how basic and wonderful his attraction was to her. She delighted him; obviously with her beauty and personality, but also with her character and strength.

ii. By analogy and application, the great delight of the beloved over his maiden helps us to understand that this shows us how much God loves us. *As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa 62:5)*

iii. "Dear soul, do you realize the desire of your Beloved towards you? You love Him; but He loves you ever so much more. You desire Him; but his desire towards you is as much greater than yours towards Him, as sunlight is more brilliant than moonlight." (Meyer)

b. **This stature of yours is like a palm tree:** Here he speaks of the maiden as being tall and noble like a great **palm tree**. It is another reference to more than her beauty, but her character and bearing as well.

c. **And your breasts like its clusters... Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine:** Seeing the great character and beauty of his maiden, the beloved

*wanted her*. He loved her for more than her body, but he also – rightfully – wanted to enjoy the pleasures of her **breasts** and body in married lovemaking.

i. Solomon had advice with the same spirit in Proverbs: *Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress? (Pro 5:19-20)*

ii. The sense we have from all this is that this couple has grown and matured in their sharing of love, sexual and otherwise. "This is a different mood from the delicate formality of their wedding night." (Glickman)

d. **The fragrance of your breath like apples, and the roof of your mouth like the best wine:** The beloved told his maiden how pleasing and satisfying their lovemaking was to him.

i. "He creates a vivid picture of his kissing her breasts as one would place the clusters of the vine to one's lips. And her kisses would bring the fragrance of her breath like the sweet scent of apples, and her mouth would be 'like the best wine' to be slowly and exquisitely enjoyed with every sip." (Glickman)

**B. The maiden longs for intimacy with her beloved.**

1. (9b-10) *The longing for intimacy.*

***The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved,  
Moving gently the lips of sleepers.***

***I am my beloved's,  
And his desire is toward me.***

a. **The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved:** This is the maiden's response to the beloved's previous statement and appeal. He said how much he enjoyed their lovemaking; now she answers with recognition of its goodness.

b. **Moving gently the lips of the sleepers:** The idea is of them asleep together, perhaps embracing one another and refreshed in love.

i. "Whereas the wedding night focused on the purpose of sex as the consummation of marriage, this night focuses on the purpose of sex as the nourishment of marriage... As they fell asleep the last kiss lingered in

each other's minds like the aftertaste of good wine.  
What an enchanting picture of the sleeping couple!"  
(Glickman)

**c. I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me:**

The maiden is completely secure in his love. She understands **his desire** as not a demand or a burden, but as wonderful and appropriate.

i. "She not only places his possession of her primary, but strengthens it by adding that his desire is toward her, and so focused is she upon him that she omits her possession of him. She has really lost herself in him and thereby found herself." (Glickman)

ii. "It is the full, final, ultimate word of love. It expresses complete satisfaction, absolute rest, and uttermost of contentment and peace. There are two elements in it. The first is that of complete abandonment; 'I am my beloved's.' The second is that of the realization that the beloved is satisfied; 'His desire is toward me.'" (Morgan)

*2. (11-13) The invitation to intimacy.*

**Come, my beloved,  
Let us go forth to the field;  
Let us lodge in the villages.  
Let us get up early to the vineyards;  
Let us see if the vine has budded,  
Whether the grape blossoms are open,  
And the pomegranates are in bloom.  
There I will give you my love.  
The mandrakes give off a fragrance,  
And at our gates are pleasant fruits,  
All manner, new and old,  
Which I have laid up for you, my beloved.**

a. **Come, my beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages:** Responding to the desire of her beloved, the maiden invited him to come away on a trip to the countryside where they could enjoy their intimacy. It was like a weekend get-away for a couple deeply in love.

i. Earlier the beloved made a similar invitation to the maiden: *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away* (Son 2:10). Now the maiden answered with a similar invitation. She seems to have matured in her self-confidence since the early days of their courtship (Son 1:5-6). She also understood that it was not only the responsibility of the man to signal the desire for intimacy.

ii. "If we must at any time listen to the praises of our virtues, if we have served God so that the Church recognises and rewards our usefulness, it is well for us to listen just as long as we are obliged to do, but no longer; and then let us turn aside at once to something more practical and more healthful to our own spirits. The spouse seems abruptly to break off from listening to the song of the virgins, and turns to her own husband- Lord, communion with whom is ever blessed and ever profitable, and she says to him, 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field.'" (Spurgeon)

b. **Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded:** Since springtime was a special emblem of their love (Son 2:10-13; Son 6:11-12). She used that image to communicate her own desire to enjoy the freshness and strength of their love and intimacy.

i. "The poet thus reveals that their relationship has gone from spring to spring, that now it has experienced a full cycle of growth." (Glickman)



c. **There I will give you my love:** The maiden was refreshingly honest and open with her beloved. She said to him, "Let's get away to the countryside and make love." This is an invitation likely to appeal to a husband.

i. In all of this we see a remarkable freedom and joy in their love. Sexual intimacy was not understood to be the husband's pleasure and the wife's duty; there is a spirit throughout the Song of Solomon that shows how good marital love can be for both partners.

ii. "Song of Solomon teaches that true freedom does not come by someone's being liberated *from* marriage. The truth is that genuine liberation comes *in* marriage. Marriage is a secure hedge that protects love as it grows. As love is nurtured, it produces freedom and fulfillment." (Estes)

d. **The mandrakes give off a fragrance:** This plant was understood to be an aphrodisiac in the ancient world, especially in the sense of increasing fertility (Gen 30:14-17).

i. "The *mandrake* or 'love apple' is a pungently fragrant plant that has long been considered an aphrodisiac – not that these lovers needed any additional stimulation, but the use of such items has long been part of the lore of love-making." (Carr)

ii. Therefore the reference to **mandrakes** shows a desire for children. "Shulamith wanted children as a visible demonstration of the oneness in her and Solomon's love." (Estes)

e. **All manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved:** This difficult to translate phrase may have the sense that she is inviting him to enjoy intimacy in ways that are both familiar and new to the couple. The idea would be they would enjoy their

lovemaking in creative ways that were planned in advance by the maiden (**which I have laid up for you**).

### **Longing for Her Beloved**

**Son 8:1** I wish that you were my brother, that my mother had nursed you at her breast. Then, if I met you in the street, I could kiss you and no one would mind.

Son 8:2 I would take you to my mother's house, where you could teach me love. I would give you spiced wine, my pomegranate wine to drink.

Son 8:3 Your left hand is under my head, and your right hand caresses me.

Son 8:4 Promise me, women of Jerusalem, that you will not interrupt our love.

Son 8:5 Who is this coming from the desert, arm in arm with her lover? Under the apple tree I woke you, in the place where you were born.

Son 8:6 Close your heart to every love but mine; hold no one in your arms but me. Love is as powerful as death; passion is as strong as death itself. It bursts into flame and burns like a raging fire.

Son 8:7 Water cannot put it out; no flood can drown it. But if any tried to buy love with their wealth, contempt is all they would get.

### **Final Advice**

Son 8:8 We have a young sister, and her breasts are still small. What will we do for her when a young man comes courting?

Son 8:9 If she is a wall, we will build her a silver tower. But if she is a gate, we will protect her with panels of cedar.

Son 8:10 I am a wall, and my breasts are its towers. My lover knows that with him I find contentment and peace.

Son 8:11 Solomon has a vineyard in a place called Baal Hamon. There are farmers who rent it from him; each one pays a thousand silver coins.

Son 8:12 Solomon is welcome to his thousand coins, and the farmers to two hundred as their share; I have a vineyard of my own!

Son 8:13 Let me hear your voice from the garden, my love; my companions are waiting to hear you speak.

Son 8:14 Come to me, my lover, like a gazelle, like a young stag on the mountains where spices grow.

## **Song of Solomon 8:1-14**

### **Song of Solomon 8 - On Mountains of Spices**

#### **A. The maiden's loving words.**

*1. (1-2) The maiden's passion for her beloved.*

**Oh, that you were like my brother,  
Who nursed at my mother's breasts!  
If I should find you outside,  
I would kiss you;  
I would not be despised.  
I would lead you *and* bring you  
Into the house of my mother,  
She *who* used to instruct me.  
I would cause you to drink of spiced wine,  
Of the juice of my pomegranate.**

a. **Oh, that you were like my brother... If I should find you outside, I would kiss you:** The maiden's idea is based on the cultural acceptance of some public displays of affection between brother and sister. She wished that she could be as open with her beloved as she would be allowed to be with her actual **brother**.

i. "She would like the liberty in public that the brother and sister in that day had. So she wishes she could

freely kiss him in public.” (Kinlaw)

b. **I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother:** The maiden wanted to enjoy the intimacy of married love with her beloved, but to enjoy in the context of the approval of their family. There was nothing impure or secretive about their love.

i. **Lead:** “The verb is used nearly ninety times in the Old Testament, with the meaning ‘teach’ or ‘learn’... the teacher is the mother who has instructed her daughter in the ‘facts of life’ and it is to that ‘schoolroom’ she wants to return to show how well she has learned her lessons.” (Carr)

ii. “In this moment of deepest intimacy, when no prying eyes are wanted, she thinks of her mother and her friends... Again we are reminded that we are social creatures inextricably bound up in a web of human relations.” (Kinlaw)

iii. **Spiced wine:** “Wine rendered peculiarly strong and invigorating. The bride and bridegroom on the wedding day both drank out of the same cup, to show that they were to *enjoy* and equally *bear* together the *comforts* and *adversities* of life.” (Clarke)

2. (3-4) *The maiden’s plea to the Daughters of Jerusalem.*

**His left hand is under my head,  
And his right hand embraces me.  
I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
Do not stir up nor awaken love  
Until it pleases.**

a. **His left hand is under my head:** This phrase was used before in Son 2:6, describing the maiden’s desire for lovemaking. The idea is that the maiden is reclined and her beloved caresses her with **his right hand** (perhaps intimately).

**b. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases:** This is the third time that this phrase is used in the Song of Solomon (previously at 2:7 and 3:5). As before, this idea can be understood as a plea to leave her sweet romantic dream uninterrupted. Or, it can be understood both in the context of *relationship* and in *passion*.

i. In terms of relationship it means, "Let our love progress and grow until it is matured and fruitful, making a genuinely pleasing relationship – *don't let us go too fast.*" In terms of passion it means, "Let our love making continue without interruption until we are both fulfilled. Don't let us start until we can go all the way."

ii. "What is this warning? That love is so sacred a thing that it must not be trifled with. It is not to be sought. It stirs and awakens of itself. To trifle with the capacity for it, is to destroy that very capacity." (Morgan)

iii. "The reader having just seen their lovely portrait of marriage might be tempted more than ever to force such a relationship in impatience." (Glickman)

## **B. Final words from the loving couple, their family, and their friends.**

*1. (5) A relative speaks to the loving couple.*

**Who is this coming up from the wilderness,  
Leaning upon her beloved?**

**I awakened you under the apple tree.**

**There your mother brought you forth;**

**There she *who* bore you brought *you* forth.**

**a. Who is this coming up from the wilderness,  
leaning upon her beloved:** As with a few passages in the Song of Solomon, it is difficult to say with certainty

who the speaker and the intended hearer are with these words. Perhaps it is best to simply assign it to an observer, either a relative (such as the maiden's brothers who will be mentioned later) or one of the Daughters of Jerusalem.

b. **Leaning upon her beloved:** The idea here is not that the maiden is old and infirmed; rather that she simply accompanies her beloved and walks with him in the closeness characteristic of husband and wife.

i. Charles Spurgeon used this as a picture of the closeness and dependence of the Church upon Jesus Christ. Many things could be said as true regarding both the maiden and the people of God.

- She leaned because she was weak and needed strength.
- She leaned because the way was long.
- She leaned because the way was perilous.
- She leaned because the path was ascending, going higher and higher.
- She leaned because her progress took her more and more away from others and more and more to her beloved's side.
- She leaned because she was sure her beloved was strong enough to bear her weight.
- She leaned because she loved him.

ii. "Beloved, there is no part of the pilgrimage of a saint in which he can afford to walk in any other way but in the way of leaning. He cometh up at the first, and he cometh up at the last, still leaning, still leaning upon Christ Jesus; ay, and leaning more and more heavily upon Christ the older he grows." (Spurgeon)

c. **I awakened you under the apple tree:** The speaker reminds the couple of their youth and family roots. They were now grown and happily married but still connected to and the product of their families.

i. "Or it may be understood of the following circumstance: The bridegroom found her once asleep under an apple tree, and awoke her; and this happened to be the very place where her mother, taken in untimely labour, had brought her into the world." And here the bridegroom, in his fondness and familiarity, recalls these little adventures to her memory." (Clarke)

2. (6-7) *The maiden describes the strength of her love.*

**Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
As a seal upon your arm;  
For love *is as strong as death,*  
*Jealousy as cruel as the grave;*  
*Its flames are flames of fire,*  
**A most vehement flame.  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
Nor can the floods drown it.  
If a man would give for love  
All the wealth of his house,  
It would be utterly despised.****

a. **Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm:** Using this strong image of a **seal**, the maiden appeals to her beloved, asking him to recognize the permanence of their commitment.

i. Married love should be like a **seal**, in the sense that a seal speaks of permanence, belonging, and security. "Her love is so total and so strong that she wants their mutual possession of each other to be as lasting as life. It is a strongly poetic demand for 'until death do us part.'" (Kinlaw)

b. **For love is as strong as death:** The maiden considered that love was like **death** in its permanence and strength. Death is **strong** enough to make every man answer to it; love is much the same way and the strength of romantic love is more powerful than many powerful men (Samson as one example).

c. **Jealousy as cruel as the grave:** It is hard to know if this was meant in a positive or a negative sense. There is a **jealousy** that is good and appropriate in the marriage relationship, and there is another aspect of **jealousy** that is corrosive and destructive. In the context, it is more likely that this speaks of the unrelenting desire for appropriate oneness that is not broken by a romantic competitor.

i. We should have a jealousy in our heart regarding our love for Jesus, hating anything that might come between Him and us. He certainly has such a jealousy towards us.

ii. "Whenever love absorbs the heart, jealousy will guard the object of affection. Only let a provocation occur, something of jealousy is sure to appear. Your love to Christ especially lacks the genuine stamp if it is never roused to jealousy by the malice of foes and the faithlessness of professed friends of our Lord. Many Christians nowadays have a kind of love which is too fond of ease, and too full of compromise to kindle any jealousy in their breasts." (Spurgeon)

d. **Its flames are the flames of fire, a most vehement flame:** The idea is that love is like a fire, with great power and usefulness – for good or even for destruction. Love has lifted some to great heights; it has consumed others and left only ashes.

i. **A most vehement flame:** The Jerusalem Bible and the American Standard Version take the last syllable



of the Hebrew word translated **vehement flame** (*salhebetya*) as being the divine name Yahweh, the LORD. Therefore, they translate, *a flame of Yahweh himself* (JB) and *a very flame of Jehovah* (ASV). "The meaning could be 'love is a flame which has its origin in God'; while this is technically true, the fact that this is the only place in the Song a possible use of the divine name appears militates against this understanding of the final syllable. More likely, this is simply a use of a standard idiom for the superlative." (Carr)

ii. "More forcible is the language of the original — 'The coals thereof are the coals of God,' — a Hebrew idiom to express the most glowing of all flames — 'the coals of God!' as though it were no earthly flame, but something far superior to the most vehement affection among men." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The love on which a beautiful love is built is a persevering flame burning as brightly at the beginning as it does later on." (Glickman)

e. **If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised:** This phrase reflects the sentiment of a popular song from many years ago, that "money can't buy me love." Love has its own economy, often dramatically separate from our normal financial reckonings.

i. If a man did **give for love all the wealth of his house**, "He would be despised for reducing love and the person from which it comes to an object. If you set the price of love at a billion dollars, you would then reduced it to nothing. By its very nature love must be given. Sex can be bought; love must be given." (Glickman)

ii. All in all, these verses give us four remarkable pictures of love:

- Love is like a seal on the heart and arm. *Therefore*, love belongs to those who are willing to give up something of themselves to another person who is also willing to give up something of themselves.
- Love is like death, in that it is persistent and keeps reaching out; it is total and irreversible. *Therefore*, the bond of love needs to be nourished and regarded as permanent.
- Love is like a raging fire and cannot be extinguished. *Therefore*, one must take care how, where, and with whom the spark of love is ignited.
- Love cannot be bought or sold; it is not a piece of merchandise. *Therefore*, love must be appreciated for its great value and not be taken for granted.

3. (8-9) *The maiden's brothers.*

**We have a little sister,  
And she has no breasts.  
What shall we do for our sister  
In the day when she is spoken for?  
If she *is* a wall,  
We will build upon her  
A battlement of silver;  
And if she *is* a door,  
We will enclose her  
With boards of cedar.**

a. **We have a little sister, and she has no breasts:**

The idea is that Son 8:8-9 is a look back at a planning session held by the maiden's brothers when she was still a fairly young girl. They recognized that they had a responsibility towards her; to plan ahead for the day she would be spoken for – the day of her marriage.

i. Upon this verse, the Puritan John Trapp made a curious comment by allegory: "A society of men without the preaching of the Word is like a mother of children without breasts."

ii. Matthew Poole had another allegorical idea: "This signifies the present doleful state of the Gentiles, which as yet were not grown up into a church estate, and wanted the milk or food of life, as for itself, so also for its members."

**b. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for:** The idea is that the brothers wondered what they could do to prepare and protect their sister before her eventual marriage (**when she is spoken for**).

i. We might normally think that this supervisory role would be more assumed by a father in the family instead of brothers. There is no certain explanation as for why the father is not mentioned in this context; there could be any number of reasons.

ii. "Shulamith's brothers took their responsibility seriously, for long before she was of marriageable age they determined to keep her pure for her husband (Son 8:9). They resolved to provide guidance and positive pressure to help Shulamith remain a virgin." (Estes)

**c. If she is a wall, we will build upon her... and if she is a door, we will enclose her:** The brothers wisely decided to guide and help their sister according to her own character and choices. If she were like **a wall** that stood effectively against despoilers and exploiters, they would reward, encourage, and **build upon her**. If she were more like **a door** allowing unwise access, they would then restrict her freedoms in her own self-interest (**we will enclose her**).

i. "If she be a wall, built upon the true foundation, strong and stable, she shall be adorned and beautified with battlements of silver; but if unstable and easily moved to and fro like a door, such treatment will be as impossible as unsuitable; she will need to be inclosed with boards of cedar, hedged in with restraints, for her own protection." (Taylor)

ii. "If she could handle responsibility, they would give it to her; if not, she would be restricted." (Glickman)

iii. This presents a principle that is often overlooked in the western world and dangerously over-emphasized in other parts of the world: that the family has a shared responsibility for the purity and romantic supervision of the young of the family.

4. (10) *The maiden answers her brothers.*

**I am a wall,  
And my breasts like towers;  
Then I became in his eyes  
As one who found peace.**

a. **I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers:** In response to the statement of the brothers the maiden – perhaps leaving the retrospective remembrance and thinking of her present maturity and honorable courtship and marriage – reminds her brothers that in the descriptions they offered (*wall* or *door* in Son 8:9), she was and is definitely a strongly defended **wall**, even with the strength of **towers**.

i. The phrase "**my breasts like towers**" does not intend to describe the appearance of her figure, but simply connects with the idea of a *wall* used in this and the previous verse. Her honor was strongly defended.

ii. "She herself had chosen to be a wall. And finally she grew up. Her breasts were like towers. The towers were the fortresses of the land. They inspired a somber appreciation from the citizens and a healthy respect from their enemies." (Glickman)

b. **Then I became in his eyes as one who found peace:** The maiden described her married state. Her blessedness could be described as making her **as one who found peace**. There was a peace, a well-being, a security in her life, flowing in part from the health of her marriage.

i. **Then I became in his eyes as one who found peace:** This slightly changes a familiar Old Testament expression – *to find grace in the eyes of the LORD* (as in Gen 6:8 in reference to Noah). "Frequently, as in this case, it refers to a girl finding love in the eyes of a man. She is said to have found grace in his eyes. So when this young girl says she has found peace in his eyes, she is saying that she has found romance in Solomon's eyes." (Glickman)

ii. We dare not miss the connection between the wise and noble defense of her honor and virginity described in these and the previous verses, and the health and **peace** she now found in married life. Her **wall**-like character was an important part of the foundation for the blessed married life she now enjoyed.

iii. It was also important that her family encouraged this concern and character development in her from a young age. One reason this is important is that once we experience something – such as premarital sex – the temptation to do it again will be stronger. This is confirmed not only by experience, but also by neurobiology. When we get a

chemical/hormonal/biological rush from a physically pleasurable experience, it builds brain circuits that look for a repeat of the same rush. The body also compensates by decreasing the production and contribution of natural and healthy chemical/hormonal/biological agents.

iv. In all this, medical research agrees with the Bible: *His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin* (Pro 5:22). If we fail to be a **wall** against certain sins, we will be *caught in the cords* of those sins, and never know the goodness of becoming **as one who found peace**.

5. (11-12) *The maiden understands her value.*

**Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon;  
He leased the vineyard to keepers;  
Everyone was to bring for its fruit  
A thousand silver coins.  
My own vineyard *is* before me.  
You, O Solomon, *may have* a thousand,  
And those who tend its fruit two hundred.**

a. **Solomon had a vineyard... he leased the vineyard to keepers:** The idea in these verses seems to be an appreciation of the cost and value of something. Solomon's **vineyard** had value, and so it cost something to use it.

b. **My own vineyard is before me:** The maiden recognized her own value, and after defending her honor and virginity both in her youth and courtship, she was then able to freely and rightly give it to Solomon (**You, O Solomon, may have a thousand**).

i. "Her own vineyard represents her own person (Son 1:6; Son 2:15). Its 'position' before her emphasizes that she is under her free direction to do

with herself as she pleases.” (Glickman) And, she chose to give herself to Solomon, her beloved. The entire value of it (**a thousand silver coins**) was given to him.

ii. The attitude of the maiden is quite different from that of most people in modern western culture. She saw genuine *value* in both her virginity and more importantly in *herself*. She was not to be cheaply and easily given away; and therefore, she found a man who truly valued her, estimating her worth correctly and highly.

iii. “Shulamith’s life was her vineyard. Because she was pure, she could give herself entirely to her husband. Her heart was undivided, and her body was not tainted by premarital sex.” (Estes)

iv. “There is always the possibility, though difficult for us, that the reference to Solomon’s vineyard is to be taken literally while the reference to the spouse’s vineyard is metaphorical. Jesus did the same kind of thing when he said, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days’ (Joh 2:19).” (Kinlaw)

v. “There are a great many people, who seem to forget that they have a vineyard of their own to keep; or else, if they remember it, they cannot say, ‘My vineyard, which is mine, is before me,’ for they go about gazing on other people’s vineyards, instead of keeping their eyes fixed upon their own. They say, ‘Look at So-and-so’s vineyard; I don’t think he trims his vines in the new style.’” (Spurgeon)

c. **And those who tend its fruit two hundred:** It is a little difficult to understand exactly what the maiden refers to here. In context, it is probably a way of giving credit to her brothers for their concern and effort in guarding her honor before marriage.

i. "The probability is that references that were easily understandable when written have become problems for us because of distance and its accompanying ignorance of ancient customs." (Kinlaw)

ii. By analogy, Charles Spurgeon considered that **those who tend its fruit** were pastors and ministers of the gospel, and that they also were due their own **two hundred**. He thought this spoke of the responsibility of a congregation to support their minister.

iii. "I may, perhaps, have some members of country churches present, who are not kind to their minister. I can speak plainly upon this point, because my people are almost too kind to me; but I say to members of other churches, — Take care of your minister, for you will never get a blessing unless you are kind to him whom God has set over you. If your minister does not have his two hundred, — that is, if he has not your love and respect, and if you do not give him sufficient to keep him above want, — you cannot expect the Spirit of God to work with you. I believe there are scores of churches in which no good is ever done, for this very reason. God says, 'You starve my minister, so I will starve you. You find fault with him, and quarrel with him; then I will find fault with you, and quarrel with you. There shall be no blessing upon you; you shall be like Gilboa, there shall be neither dew nor rain upon you.'" (Spurgeon)

6. (13) *The beloved answers his maiden.*

**You who dwell in the gardens,  
The companions listen for your voice—  
Let me hear it!**

a. **You who dwell in the gardens:** This seems to be the beloved addressing the maiden with this title. She



could be called one who did **dwell in the gardens**, in places of delight, well-cared for, and associated with their love (Son 4:12-16; Son 6:2; Son 6:11).

i. "In these last two verses we 'overhear' Solomon and Shulamith whispering tenderly to each other." (Estes)

ii. Because her husband, the beloved, cherished her so much her life was indeed as pleasant as a garden. Dr. Jeff Schloss noted how important it was for a wife to feel this, explaining that husbands and wives rank their happiness in correlation to how much they believe they are loved and cherished by their spouse. *Wives who do not have the confidence that they are loved and cherished by their husband in fact die sooner, and they die sooner than single women.* These findings are true across cultures.

b. **Let me hear it:** Though others also enjoyed the company of the maiden (**the companions listen for your voice**), the beloved longed to enjoy the blessing of oneness and companionship with his maiden. Therefore, he asked to hear her voice in a place fond to their remembrance.

i. Some believe that these last two verses speak of a separation between the maiden and her beloved; some business or necessity has kept them apart. She is safe and blessed **in the gardens**, and here the beloved longs to hear her voice. If so, then these closing verses show the relationship strong and blessed, even when the couple cannot be together as much as they would like to be.

ii. "In other words- when I am far away from thee, fill thou this garden with my name, and let thy heart commune with me." (Spurgeon)

7. (14) *The maiden calls out to her beloved.*

**Make haste, my beloved,  
And be like a gazelle  
Or a young stag  
On the mountains of spices.**

a. **Make haste, my beloved:** If we take the suggestion that these last verses speak of a necessary separation between the maiden and the beloved, then this is her response to his desire to hear her voice once again (Son 8:13). She calls for him to **make haste**, so they can be reunited.

i. Thus we see that the Song of Solomon closes with the same sense of passion and intensity with which it opened. It reminds us that though the relationship between the maiden and the beloved aged and matured, it had not lost its passion and excitement.

ii. "In every way we have seen a marriage in maturity. In their more intimate sexual experience, in the greater security of the wife, in her playful freedom to initiate love, and finally in the fullness of their relationship the poet has sketched a revealing portrait of the model couple." (Glickman)

iii. If we make the analogy to the relationship between Jesus and His people, then we can say that the words "**Make haste**" speak of her desire for His soon return. "I believe that our relationship to the Second Advent of Christ may be used as a thermometer with which to tell the degree of our spiritual heat. If we have strong desires, longing desires, burning desires, for the coming of the Lord, we may hope that it is well with us; but if we have no such desires, I think, at best, we must be somewhat careless; perhaps, to take the worst view of our case, we are sadly declining in grace." (Spurgeon)

b. **And be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices:** Previously the maiden thought of her beloved as *like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether*. Here the similar idea is connected with **mountains of spices**.

i. **Spices** speak of beauty, of fragrance, of value, of wealth, of sweetness; and these are **mountains of spices**! This was how great, how precious, how wonderful their relationship was to the maiden. No wonder she longed for his soon return.

ii. "The final invitation is to a continued celebration of the love and communion which the happy couple shares. The joys of physical union and mutual enjoyment are stamped with God's approval, for the Song of Songs is part of his holy Word." (Carr)

iii. "The figures of the deer and the mountains of spices symbolize for the last time the lover and his beloved. Restraints are gone. He is hers and she is his. They are free to pursue those delights of love that image a love to come for every believer." (Kinlaw)